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IDOLS OF THE FRENCH STAGE.

BY

H. SUTHERLAND EDWARDS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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IDOLS OF THE FRENCH STAGE.

MADELEINE GUIMARD.

MADELEINE GUIMARD, a dancer, who excited as much admiration, and scattered as many fortunes as any woman who ever appeared on the stage, was ugly, thin, of sallow complexion, and marked with the smallpox. Lord Mount-Edgecumbe, in his *Reminiscences*, tells us that when, at an advanced age, she appeared for the second time at the King's (now Her Majesty's) Theatre, she still possessed "grace and gentility," adding that she had never been distinguished by anything more substantial.

Although by no means the last celebrated dancer who appeared on the French stage, she was the last dancer of French origin who acquired celebrity in France. Camargo, one of the most famous of her predecessors, was Spanish by birth; Taglioni, one of the most illustrious of her followers, was Italian. The four members of the Vestris family, who, for about a century, directed the ballet in France, were also Italians (their original name being Vestri), and it would be easy to show that dancing as an art was, like gloves, fans, and other trifling but tasteful things, introduced into France from Italy. Pope Alexander VI. and the Borgias, gave magnificent ballets at a time when the ballet, as a dramatic form, was unknown in France.

According, however, to Castil-Blaze, who has investigated with equal care the history of the ballet and of the opera in France, traces of *divertissements*, more or less in dramatic style, may be found at so early a period as that of King Caribert of Paris. This sovereign had previously cared only for the pleasures of hunting. The chase was his sole amusement, his daily occupation; and, in the pursuit of wild beasts, he quite

neglected his Queen Ingoberge, who remained desolate at home, and enjoyed only an occasional glimpse of her royal husband. In order to keep him near her, Ingoberge had recourse to the charms of music, and instituted concerts at her palace, consisting of hymns, chants, and national songs, such being the only music of that period. Caribert, however, seems to have found these entertainments depressing, and preferred the bugle-call of his huntsmen.

In despair at the little success by which her endeavours had been attended, the Queen now thought that a result might be obtained through entertainments of a lighter and more engaging kind. Dancing and orchestral music she especially counted on; and the King, kindly renouncing his field sports for a few days, found the Queen's new idea so much to his taste that he soon gave up hunting and shooting altogether.

The spirit, however, of the hunter was still strong within the breast of Caribert. Only he had changed the objects of his pursuit. Two sisters, of ravishing beauty, dancing like sylphs, and singing like syrens, now occupied in his heart the

place formerly held by partridges and deer. Mérofléde and Morcovère were the mediæval names of the young women who had so completely captivated their prince; and soon Caribert's wife, the too ingenious Ingoberge, saw that the remedy she had contrived was worse than the evil she had sought to avert. Laws in those days were loose, and kings powerful; and before long the singing and the dancing, the talent, the beauty, and the charm of the two sisters, had made such an impression on the happy King of Paris that he married them one after the other.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century, in the year 1393, a masquerade, but not a regular ballet, was given, in which Charles VI. had a narrow escape of his life. The Duchess de Berri had given the ballet in her palace at the Gobelins, at which all the members of her Court were present. Suddenly a party of masks dressed as savages appeared, when the Duke of Orleans, who probably knew already who they were, took up a torch in order to examine them at his ease, and set fire to the linen which, seamed with pitch, covered their corsets. The flames spread

from one to another, and soon the savages, all ablaze, were shrieking like men possessed. Everyone rushed towards the doors; but, in the midst of this scene of terror and disorder, the Duchess, who was in the secret of the masquerade, recognised the King, and, covering him with her dress, thus preserved him from the fire. The fright, however, with which he had been seized, had the effect of making him fall periodically into fits of madness, which gradually became worse and worse. Count de Jouy and the Bastard of Foix had perished miserably; and the young Nantouillet would have been broiled like ham had he not thrown himself into a tub of water. The Parisians conceived violent suspicions against the Duke of Orleans, thinking that the act was premeditated; and for many days he was obliged to remain in his palace without daring to show himself. To expiate his crime, he built a chapel at the Célestins, and hastened to found a pious service for the souls of those who had died from this accident.

Good solo dancing, moreover, if not ballets in set form, might be seen at the Court of Francis I.; and the graceful and ingenious Marguerite de

Valois has been called the Taglioni of her time. Don John of Austria, Viceroy of the Low Countries, went to Paris post-haste from Brussels, travelling *incog.*, in order to see Marguerite dance a minuet, after which he at once returned to his head-quarters. France, however, knew nothing at this time of such ballets as the Borgias were in the habit of getting up. The Sovereign Pontiffs had already, in 1500, a theatre which was celebrated for the splendour of its decorations and the ingenuity of its machinery. Throughout the sixteenth century the Italian composers were much occupied both with the ballet and with the lyric drama; and a ballet bearing a strong resemblance to an opera was performed in Paris, under the superintendence of Baltazarini, rather more than three hundred years ago.

Baltazarini, who, after establishing himself in France, took the name of Beaujoyeux, without being introduced into France by Catherine de Medicis, was sent there at her request, and by her was received, and formally appointed to his prescribed duties. He came accompanied by a band of violins; and Catherine at once arranged

for Baltazarini and his musicians to give proofs of their ability as composers and executants, with whom were associated Beaulieu, Master of the Music to King Henry III., besides the artists and decorators most in renown at the time. The entertainment which Baltazarini had been ordered to prepare had no name at the time, and its author seems scarcely to have known whether to call it a lyrical drama, a drama in dancing, or by what other title. Ultimately he named it a comic ballet (*Ballet Comique de la Reine*); using the word comic, not in its narrow sense as amusing, but in its wide sense as dramatic. Thus the Théâtre Français is equally called the Comédie Française, though it is, and always has been, quite as much the home of tragedy as of comedy. Baltazarini, otherwise Beaujoyeux, says distinctly in his preface that what he has written is a dramatic ballet, a play in which the action is set forth by means of dancing and singing. The word "opera," as standing for "opera musicale," had not yet been invented. The *Ballet Comique de la Reine*, produced in the year 1581, as represented in the palace by the Queen, the Princesses, and

the nobles of the Court, began at ten in the evening, and it did not finish until three in the morning; and is written in the records of the time that "the Queen and the Princesses, who represented Naiads and Nereids, concluded the ballet by a distribution of presents, offered in various ingenious ways, to the princes and the nobles who, in the disguise of Tritons, had danced with them."

That great warrior and statesman, Henry IV., was not ashamed to dance in ballets; and Sully, the Minister to whom he owed so much, used to join him on these occasions—whether in a spirit of flattery, or from a genuine love of kicking up his heels, does not appear. From 1589 until 1610 more than eighty grand ballets were produced at the Court of Henry IV., without counting minor divertisements and organised masquerades. The Court of Louis XIII. was a serious one, but it was not without its ballets, which were directed by the Duke de Namur. This nobleman was passionately fond of dancing; but he was affected with the gout, and, either from a morbid delight in his own sufferings, or from a wish to make

them the subject of mirth, he composed a ballet called *Les Goutteux,* in which, to assert his rank among the dancers, he caused himself to be carried at their head in an arm-chair. During the performance of the "Gout-dancers," as the Duke's ballet might have been called, the Cardinal of Savoy happened to be in France, and the Queen paid him the compliment of asking him to arrange a ballet for the King. The courtiers laughed at the idea, not because it seemed out of place that a cardinal should undertake the duties of a ballet master, but because, coming from a mountainous country, he could not, as they imagined, possess the delicacy of taste so characteristic of people dwelling, like the French, in the plains. The news of these criticisms before the work reached the Cardinal, who, somewhat piqued, and determined to do his best, produced at Monceaux a ballet entitled *Les Montagneurs,* in which the most graceful tableaux were varied by some very ingenious satirical songs. The Cardinal's ballet was much applauded, and the laughter was all against those who, by anticipation, had condemned it.

The Spirit of Gossip is said to have been repre-

sented in the Cardinal's ballet by an old woman mounted upon an ass: the Spirit of Lying by a personage who had a wooden leg, whose dress was covered with masks, and who carried a dark-lantern.

Louis XIV. had scarcely attained his majority when Mazarin made him dance before the public in a ballet called *La Prospérité des Armes de France.* As the Parisians of that time had never seen a king dance on the stage, the Cardinal thought it right to put forward a special announcement on the subject.

"After receiving this year," the proclamation began, "so many victories from Heaven, it is not enough to render thanks in our temples; it is also necessary that the gratitude of our hearts should manifest itself through public rejoicings,—the siege of Cassel, the capture of Arras, the Flemings drinking beer, the Spaniards and French fighting in rhythm, with Jupiter, Apollo, Mercury, the Tritons, the Nereids, the Muses, a rhinoceros, and a famous acrobat, Cardelin, dancing on a tight-rope, which is partially concealed by clouds from the eyes of the spectators."

Meanwhile, Louis the Great did his steps on the

stage, unmindful of the fact that a tight-rope dancer had, for a time at least, been placed above him.

These ridiculous exhibitions did not pass without criticism; and in the form of Books of the Ballet, pamphlets and satires, were published in abundance.

The title of one of these pretended libretti was, "Grand Ballet danced on the theatre of France by Cardinal Mazarin and all the troop of Cardinalists and Mazarinists. Basle: At the shop of Mr Nobody. In 4o. 1649."

"The laughable ballet of Mazarin's nieces, or their theatre overturned in France."

"Ballet danced before the King and the Queen-Regent his mother by the Mazarinic trio before leaving France, in burlesque verses, and in six scenes."

Hitherto the ballet had been exclusively a royal entertainment, to be witnessed only at one of the Court residences. But in Louis XIV.'s reign, after

the arrival of Lulli in Paris, and the establishment of the French Opera under the title of *Académie Royale de Musique*, it became one of the favourite entertainments of the lyric theatre. Lulli, at once composer, conductor, ballet-master and dancer, wished to get up the ballets himself; and he is said to have distinguished himself personally in the grotesque interludes of the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.

To show what a serious view Louis XIV. took of dancing, it is only necessary to cite the decree by which he founded that "Académie de Danse" which, after a time, seems to have been absorbed by the Académie de Musique, called at one time Académie de Musique et de Danse.

"Although the art of dancing," began the letters-patent, "has always been recognised as one of the most becoming and most necessary for forming the body, and giving to it the most natural dispositions for all kinds of exercises, and among others that of arms, and, consequently, one of the most useful to our nobility, and to others who have the honour of approaching us not only in time of war in our armies, but also in time of peace in the divertisements of our ballets; nevertheless, into the said art,

as into all others, have been introduced during the late wars a great number of abuses capable of bringing about their irreparable ruin. Many ignorant people have endeavoured to disfigure and corrupt the art of dancing as practised by the greater number of people of quality; of which the consequence has been that we see very few people at our Court capable of taking part in our ballets, however desirous we might be of having their services. It being necessary to supply this want, and being desirous to re-establish the said art in perfection, and to give it such development as it may be susceptible of, we have thought it right to establish in our good town of Paris a Royal Academy of Dancing, composed of all the persons most experienced in this art."

The decree concludes with the names of the thirteen most esteemed professors of dancing then in Paris. These gentlemen worked at first with a will, and they are said to have devised a system of written dances, in which the various steps were indicated by signs like notes in music. With all their science, however, they produced very little; and soon the Academy of Dancing disappeared,

or, as before suggested, was received into the bosom of the so-called Académie de Musique, where, except practically at rehearsals and public representations, music was never made a subject of tuition.

Having thus far traced the history of the ballet in France, and having already given a sketch of the career of one of the most famous of French ballet dancers, Mdlle. Camargo, I may now pass on to Mdlle. Sallé, who will always be known, in connection with literature, through the verses addressed to her by Molière, and the letter of introduction which, when she was about to visit England, Montesquien gave her to Locke; and to Madeleine Guimard, who inspired Marmontel with the lines,—

"Est il bien vrei, jeune et belle damnée," etc.

and who was as much the friend of painters as of poets.

Madeleine Guimard, with all her powers of fascination, was not beautiful, nor even pretty, and she was notoriously thin. Byron used to say of thin women that if they were old they reminded him of spiders, if young and pretty of dried

butterflies. Madeleine Guimard's theatrical friends, of course, compared her to a spider. Behind the scenes she was known as *l'Araignée.* Another of her names was *La Squelette des Grâces.* Sophie Arnould called her "a little silkworm," for the sake of the joke about "*la feuille des bénéfices;*" and once, when she was dancing between two male dancers in a *pas de trois* representing two satyrs fighting for a nymph, Sophie said of the exhibition that it was like two dogs fighting for a bone.

Madeleine Guimard is said to have preserved her youth and her charm in a marvellous manner; besides which, she had such a perfect acquaintance with all the mysteries of the toilet that, by the arts of dress and adornment alone, she could have made herself look young when she was already beginning to grow old. Marie Antoinette used to consult her about her costume and the arrangement of her hair; and once when, for insubordination at the theatre, she had been ordered to For l'Evèque, the *danseuse* is reported to have said to her maid: "Never mind, Gothon; I have written to the Queen to tell her that I have dis-

covered a new style of *coiffure;* we shall be free before the evening."

One evening, when Madeleine Guimard was dancing in *Les Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour*, a very heavy cloud fell from the theatrical heavens upon one of her shapely arms and broke it. A mass was said for Mdlle. Guimard's broken arm in the Church of Nôtre Dame.

Houdon, the sculptor, moulded Mdlle. Guimard's foot. Fragonard, the painter, decorated her magnificent, luxuriously furnished hotel. In his mural pictures he made a point of introducing the face and figure of the divinity of the place, until at last he fell in love with his model, and, presuming so far as to show signs of jealousy, was replaced by David—Louis David, the fierce and virtuous Republican.

David, the great painter of the Republic and of the Empire, was, of course, at that time a very young man. He was, in fact, only a student; and Madeleine Guimard, finding that the decoration of her "Temple of Terpsichore" (as the *danseuse's*

artistic and voluptuous palace was called) did not quite satisfy his aspirations, gave him the stipend he was to have received for covering her walls with fantastic designs that he might continue his studies in the classical style according to his own ideas.

This was charity of a really thoughtful and delicate kind. As an instance of bountiful generosity and kind-heartedness, may be mentioned Madeleine Guimard's conduct during the severe winter of 1768, when she herself visited all the poor in her neighbourhood, and gave to each destitute family enough to live on for a year.

"Not yet Magdalen repentant, but already Magdalen charitable!" exclaimed a preacher in allusion to Madeleine Guimard's good action (which soon became known all over Paris, though the dancer herself had not said a word about it). "The hand," he added, "which knows so well how to give alms will not be rejected by St. Peter when it knocks at the gate of Paradise."

A few months before Gluck left Paris for the last time, an insurrection broke out at the Opera. The revolutionary spirit was abroad in Paris. The

success of the American War of Independence, the tumultuous meetings of the French Parliament, the increasing resistance to authority which now manifested itself everywhere in France: all these stimulants to revolt seem to have taken effect on the singers and dancers of the Académie. The company resolved to carry on the theatre itself for its own benefit, and the director Devismes was called upon to abdicate. The principal insurgents held what they called a "Congress" at the house of Madeleine Guimard; and the "God of Dancing," Auguste Vestris, declared loudly that he was the Washington of the affair.

Every day some fresh act of insubordination was committed, and the chiefs of the plot had to be forced to appear on the stage by the direct agency of the police.

"The Minister desires me to dance," said Madeleine Guimard on one of these occasions: "Eh bien, qu'il y prenne garde; je pourrais bien le faire sauter."

As the leader of the conspiracy, Guimard acted with great skill and discretion.

"One thing above all!" she said to her con-

federates, "no combined resignations; that is what ruined the parliament."

In the end, after many animated scenes, this revolt was terminated by the city of Paris cancelling Devismes' lease, and taking upon itself the management of the theatre; Devismes receiving a large sum in compensation, and the appointment of director at a fixed salary.

Mention has been made of one stage accident which occurred to Madeleine Guimard. By another, in 1781, she nearly lost her life. It was in that year that the Académie Royale was burnt to the ground. Gluck's *Orphée* had just been performed, and in the course of the piece by which it was succeeded (*Coronis*, composed by Rey, conductor of the orchestra) one of the scenes caught fire. Dauberval, the principal dancer, had enough presence of mind to order the curtain down at once. The public wanted no more of *Coronis*, and went quietly away without calling for the conclusion of Rey's opera, and without having the least idea of what was taking place behind the curtain. In the meanwhile the fire had spread on the stage beyond the possibility of extinction. Singers,

dancers, musicians and scene-shifters rushed in terror from the theatre, and about a dozen persons who were unable to escape perished in the conflagration. Madeleine Guimard was nearly burnt to death in her dressing-room, which was surrounded by flames. One of the carpenters, however, penetrated into her *loge*, wrapped her up in a counterpane (she was entirely undressed), and bore her triumphantly through the fire to a place of safety.

I have not space to describe Mdlle. Guimard's private theatre, nor to speak of her *liaison* with the Prince de Soubise, nor of her elopement with a German prince, whom the Prince de Soubise pursued, wounding him, and killing three of his servants, nor of her ultimate marriage with a humble "professor of graces" at the Conservatory of Paris. I must mention, however, that in her decadence Madeleine Guimard visited London (a dozen Princes de Soubise would have followed her with drawn swords had she attempted to leave Paris during her prime), and that Lord Mount-Edgecumbe, the author of the interesting *Musical Reminiscences*, saw her dance at the King's Theatre

in the year 1789. This was the year of the taking of the Bastille, when a Parisian artist might well have been glad to make a little tour abroad. The dancers who had appeared at the beginning of the season had been insufferably bad, and the manager was at last compelled to send to Paris for more and better performers. "Amongst them," says Lord Mount-Edgecumbe, in a passage previously referred to, "came the famous Madeleine Guimard, then near sixty years old, but still full of grace and gentility, and she had never possessed more." Madeleine Guimard had ceased to be the rage in Paris for nearly ten years. "Vers 1780," says Arsène Houssaye in his *Galerie du Dix-huitième Siecle,* "elle tomba peu à peu dans l'oubli;" but she was not sixty or even fifty years old when she came to London. M. Castil-Blaze, an excellent authority in such matters, tells us, in his *Histoire de l'Académie Royale de Musique*, that she was born in 1743.

MADAME DUGAZON.

Louise-Rosalie Lefèvre, afterwards Mme. Dugazon, was born at Berlin in 1753. She was eight years old when her parents sent her to Paris. Daughter of an actor who belonged to the Comédie Française, she was from childhood trained and destined for the stage. Her father's first intention was to make her a dancer, and it was as a dancer that she made her *début* at the Comédie Italienne in 1767. She appeared for the first time in a *pas de deux* which occurred in the ballet introduced into the *Nouvelle École des Femmes.*

She was dancing to the best of her ability, and not without a certain success, when Grétry was struck with her lady-like air, the subtle play of her

features, and the lustre of her eyes. The young girl evinced such talent that the master promised her a part in his next opera. He kept his word: and when, in 1769, he produced *Lucile*, it was for her that he composed the charming air, "On dit qu'à quinze ans."

The success with which she rendered it decided her future. She sang the air with such grace, such seductive *näiveté*, that Grétry advised her to devote herself seriously to the study of music, and promised that he himself would not forget her.

From that day, it is said, she divided herself between dancing, which was her duty, and the study of music, which was her passion.

She found herself, at all events, in a good school. Mme. Favart had consented to assist her with her experienced counsels. From the first moment Mme. Favart had foreseen that this girl was destined to be her successor at the Opéra Comique. She foresaw it, however, without jealousy, and was magnanimous enough to do everything in her power to encourage the bent of the young aspirant. The lessons she gave

were not thrown away upon the gifted pupil, who repaid her teacher with the liveliest gratitude. If, at a later period, she caused the public to forget her benefactress, she, on her side, never ceased to remember her; and even in her old age, when she had retired from the theatre, Mme. Dugazon could not mention the name of Favart without tears in her eyes. Unfortunately Mme. Favart, carried off suddenly in her forty-fifth year, did not live to see her pupil's triumphs.

At length, in 1774, Mdlle. Lefèvre played for the first time a definite part. It was that of Pauline in *Sylvain*. Her success was enormous. At a single bound she attained the highest rank as an actress, and from this elevation never afterwards descended. From year to year her success continued to grow, and her talent to expand. Each of her creations was a triumph. *Les Evènements imprévus*, *l'Amant jaloux*, *Les Amours d'été*, and a score of other pieces, owed all their popularity to her impersonations.

Although she appeared at the Comédie Italienne

in 1774, she was not appointed a regular member of the company until two years afterwards. But from the first moment she had become the favourite of the public; for, with her youth, her beauty, and her talent, she possessed all the qualities which could enchant an audience, and evoke the worship of the pit. People vied with one other in eulogising her sympathetic voice, her fascinating manner, her exquisite sensibility, her gaiety which was so contagious, her acting which was so tender and impassioned.

Some chroniclers declare that she was extremely pretty rather than very beautiful, and that what particularly distinguished her was her air of native refinement. She had delicate features, a flexible physiognomy, an expressive mouth, and, in particular, a pair of deeply-lashed, bewitching eyes, eloquent of all the flitting humours or profound emotions of her soul. Her figure, without being tall, was well proportioned, and her gestures possessed a peculiar charm.

Rich in so many natural gifts, she was of course surrounded by a crowd of suitors and admirers. No actress of her time was so besieged.

The most dazzling offers were made to her on every side; and her sole difficulty lay in determining her choice. At length, to her misfortune, as it afterwards proved, she decided to accept the hand of Dugazon, of the Comédie Française, to whom, in due course, she was married.

There is no doubt that Dugazon was a great comedian, notwithstanding his bad taste and his passion for what was low, trivial, and burlesque. With a profound knowledge of his art, he possessed a physiognomy of marvellous flexibility, which he could so change at any moment that it appeared as if he had put on a mask. "By a trick," said a critic, "or by the contraction of certain muscles of his face, he possesses the faculty of instantly disfiguring himself beyond all recognition." Sometimes, it is true, he abused this "power of face," as Pope somewhere calls it, and disgusted the audience with his diabolical grimaces. But when he did not run to extremes, he was inimitable in his favourite parts; and it was in vain that Dazincourt attempted to eclipse him. No one, indeed, could approach him as Scapin in the *Fourberies*, as M. Jourdain

in the *Bourgeois,* as Mascarille in *l'Etourdi,* or as Sganarelle in *Don Juan.*

But if the actor was excellent, the man was altogether unbearable. A braggart and a meddler, he was as rash with his sword as with his tongue. Off the stage, indeed, he was always, in one way or another, playing the fool; and in the drawing-room he was simply a rude jester who took such gross familiarities that anyone who was once civil to him could never afterwards keep him at arm's length.

He was admitted into the highest circles of society, but only in the character of buffoon; and in this character, which he accepted with an air of resignation, he did not forget to revenge himself on everyone around. An audacious parasite, he was by no means easy to get rid of when once indiscreetly admitted.

It was Dugazon who was one day summoned by Louis XVI. when that monarch, displeased at seeing the Queen attend the balls of the Opera in opposition to his advice, had suddenly bethought himself of a method of curing her of so low and frivolous a taste.

The King sent in the greatest secrecy for the comedian, and gave him a positive command to "disgust" Marie Antoinette at the next ball, by behaving to her as though she were the commonest woman present, with no feelings which could, by any possibility, be shocked.

Dugazon, with the utmost alacrity, undertook to play a part in which all his native rudeness and vulgarity was, by royal permission, to find absolute vent. He attended the next ball in the disguise of a fishwife, and, taking the Queen aside, behaved to her with such coarseness, such impudence, such vulgarity, that the spectators were shocked and horrified.

"Well?" said Louis XVI. the next day to Marie Antoinette.

"Never," said the poor Queen, in her folly and imprudence, "never was I so much amused as at last night's ball!"

Such, then, was the man who had married Mdlle. Lefèvre. The husband was of a teasing nature, and extremely jealous; the wife was pretty and coquettish. Under these circumstances, their domestic felicity could not be of long

duration. A month after their marriage the ill-matched pair were already like cat and dog. In less than a year their household feuds were the talk and scandal of all Paris. The wife no longer boasted of her fidelity, and scarcely disguised her flirtations; while the husband wandered about like a restless buffoon, pouring the tale of his conjugal disasters into the ear of anyone who would listen to him.

Their first grave disagreement took place in 1778, very shortly after the success of Mme. Dugazon in *Les Oreilles de Midas*, in which she had undertaken the part originally assigned to Mme. Trial, who was then seriously indisposed. Bachaumont relates the story in detail.

A certain M. de Cazes, a young Governmen official, had fallen madly in love with Mme Dugazon. Nor was his suit rejected. The better to hide their intrigue, and to insure their interviews, Mme. Dugazon introduced her husband at the house of the young man's father, where the whole party were invited to stay. Here M. Dugazon and his wife's lover frequently acted comedy scenes for the amusement of the

entire household. Soon, however, the husband began to suspect the motive with which his wife had introduced him. Impelled by jealousy, he one day forced his way into the young man's room, locked the door, and, pistol in hand, seized him by the throat, threatening to kill him on the spot unless he delivered up his wife's portrait and letters.

The wretched youth thought either that Mme. Dugazon had made a confession, or that in some other way he had been betrayed; and he thereupon surrendered the letters and the portrait to the husband, who withdrew from the room, enchanted with the success of his expedition.

M. de Cazes, however, recovered quickly from his terror. He ran after the comedian, and pursued him downstairs, crying, "Thief! assassin! Stop that villain!"

Dugazon, however, without showing the least alarm, or even quickening his pace, replied with exquisite coolness,—

"Excellent, sir; well played! Your acting is admirable. The servants would be taken in by it if they were not accustomed to our farces."

With these words he gained the door, effected his exit, and left the domestics in a state of uncertainty as to whether it was not after all a comedy.

Some days afterwards M. de Cazes happened to be on the stage at the Comédie Italienne after the performance, and Dugazon caught sight of him. He waited until the crowd had dispersed, and at a moment when he was unperceived, stole behind the young man, and, ere he had time to look round, administered five or six smart blows on his shoulders with a cane.

M. de Cazes turned round in a state of fury, beheld his "rival" (so the chronicler designates the husband), and gave vent to terrible threats. M. Dugazon pretended not to know what he meant, and, going towards him, naïvely demanded an explanation, and asked whether he was not acting some ingenious farce.

M. de Cazes thereupon lost his head with rage called Dugazon an assassin, and asserted that he had just dealt him a shower of blows with a cane.

The comedian began to whistle, and pretended

that it was impossible for an actor like himself ever to have taken such a liberty.

There were no witnesses to the assault, and much as M. de Cazes continued to fume, the affair ended in nothing. M. Dugazon, however, did not afterwards omit to brag at every supper-table of the thrashing with which he had avenged himself upon his wife's lover.

Meantime that lady's intrigues had become so numerous that the comedian, with all his ingenuity, could not detect or punish more than a mere fraction of them. At length the actress deserted her husband altogether, or at least only paid him an occasional visit.

In spite, however, of her undisguised infidelities, he was still, in 1779, "weak enough" (says the chronicler) to be jealous of his wife.

One of her admirers at this period was a chevalier named De Langeac. Dugazon wrote his wife a furious letter about her acquaintance with this man, reproaching her at the same time with a hundred other escapades. The wife hastened to hand the letter to the chevalier, who instantly swore that he would subject the writer to a

hundred strokes with his walking stick. At this very moment the comedian happened to come upon the scene, and, having overheard the threat, approached the chevalier and asked him to name the day on which he proposed to administer the castigation, in order that he might prepare himself to return it. The chevalier replied with a blow from his fist, on which the comedian sprang at him and struck him two or three times. Fortunately there were several persons present, and the two men were separated.

The affair led to nothing; and this was the last occasion on which Dugazon, now at length wearied with his wife's perfidies, attempted to avenge his honour. He resigned himself to the situation, and cultivated a feeling of indifference. The husband and wife definitively separated, and, when the Revolution arrived, they both took steps towards obtaining a divorce.

But in the meantime Mme. Dugazon had already abandoned De Langeac. A rich Parisian, Boudreau by name, who affected the character of financier and art patron, had just presented her with a charming little house, which was furnished from

cellar to attic in the most exquisite style. She took up her abode in this new residence; but she had scarcely had time to inspect all the marvels of luxury and elegance with which it was replete when she suddenly yielded to the seduction of a certain foreign count who was himself a millionaire. This attachment, however, only lasted until the count, soon afterwards, was recalled to his own country.

At this period, in 1782, the curiosity of all Paris was excited by a young and handsome youth of eighteen, who had arrived from Bordeaux, and who possessed the most surprising, the most wonderful voice which it was possible to imagine. Without knowing a note of music, he could so imitate the voice of every actor and actress at the Opera, and the sound of every instrument in the orchestra, that the ear was absolutely deceived. It was said that, alone and unaided, he could execute an entire opera.

This young prodigy became the rage of the capital. All the most famous actresses, and many ladies in high society and of noble birth, struggled to gain possession of him. In the end, however,

Dugazon managed to carry him off, and make him her toy.

This youth, Garat by name, was the son of an attorney at Bordeaux, and nephew of the man of letters who, under the Empire, was to rise to the dignity of senator.

> "Deux Garat sont connus, l'un écrit, l'autre chante ;
> Admirez, j'y consens, leurs talents que l'on vante.
> Mais ne préférez pas, si vous formez un vœu,
> La cervelle de l'oncle au gosier du neveu."

So ran the epigram penned on the occasion by Rivarol. The fame of the nephew did indeed eclipse that of the uncle. He was loved, admired, adulated, adored. Marie-Antoinette was so charmed with him that she sent a coach and six to fetch him to her palace. The boy's head was soon turned with the homage he received. He gave himself incredible airs. He told Talleyrand that he would never dine with him again, because the last time the dinner had been a minute late.

Mme. Dugazon undoubtedly exercised an influence on the talent and success of the youthful Garat. But she could not long retain possession of this dazzling butterfly, who had only to open his

wings in order to alight upon the next beautiful flower which chanced to take his fancy.

Despite her life of folly, her intrigues, her adventures, Mme. Dugazon preserved at the Opéra Comique an undiminished fame. If she once accepted a part in a new piece, its success was from that moment assured. Thus authors and composers were alike at her bidding, and bowed down to an actress who could command their fate.

An opera of which the libretto was by Monvel, and the music by Desaides, marks the commencement of the most brilliant period of her career. On the 30th of June 1783 *Blaise et Babet* was produced at the Comédie Italienne. In this little work Mme. Dugazon achieved a magnificent triumph. "It is impossible," wrote a critic, "to imagine a more adorable Babet. Never before had so much art and so much nature been seen united; never such exquisite sensibility and such intense passion."

Such was the success of the piece that, at the third representation, the Queen attended the theatre. She was so charmed with the part played by Mme. Dugazon that she longed to act it herself. The

piece was, in fact, soon afterwards presented at the royal theatre of Trianon, with Marie-Antoinette herself in the character of Babet.

Mme. Dugazon was summoned to the Court to preside with Fleury at the rehearsals, and to assist the Queen with her advice. This was not thrown away upon the royal pupil, who, according to Fleury, almost equalled the actress herself in the part of Babet.

"She was a thousand times to be applauded," he says in his *Memoirs*, "when she fell into a pretty rage, dashed away her flowers, and exclaimed, with the most charming toss of the head imaginable, 'Tu m'as fait endéver . . . endève! . . . endève!' It was such a delicious mixture of pouting and pathos, of tears and rage, of love and anger, that the courtiers, who were given to abject flattery, forgot to clap their hands, and simply wept."

But now the moment was at hand when Mme. Dugazon, in her turn, was to draw tears from the eyes of all Paris in *Nina, ou la Folle par amour.* The idea of this piece was suggested to Marsollier by an anecdote which was related in the journals of the time. It was said that, in the neighbour-

hood of Sedan, a young girl about to be married had preceded her lover on the way to the church where the ceremony was to be performed. He had promised to overtake her, but, as she walked along the country road which led to the church, she met a woman who told her that her lover was dead. The shock deprived her of her reason. Thenceforth, until her death, she walked daily more than two leagues to that very church where she had hoped to meet her intended husband. On arriving there she would sit down, and wait for him the whole day. At length, at nightfall, she would retrace her steps, exclaiming, " Let us go. He has not yet arrived; I will return to-morrow."

When he had finished the libretto, Marsollier submitted it to Dalayrac, who saw at a glance the opportunities it offered for musical effect. The composer quickly furnished the score; but, at the last moment, both he and the librettist had grave doubts as to whether their attempt to depict madness on the stage was not too hazardous. They hesitated, therefore, to produce the opera; but while they were still in a state of indecision, Melle. Guimard offered to lend them

her private theatre for an experimental representation. Here, then, it was that, before a distinguished audience of lords, ladies and courtiers, Mme. Dugazon created the part of Nina. The effect she produced was prodigious. and, on the 15th of May 1786, the curtain of the Comédie Italienne rose on the opera of *Nina, la Folle par amour.*

The enthusiasm of the public on this occasion reached the point of delirium. The tears, the applause, exceeded description. Six times in succession, at the end of the piece, the "sublime lunatic" was recalled; and at each subsequent representation the public excitement, if possible, increased. Not an evening passed but some lady in the audience fainted with emotion.

Madness became suddenly the fashion. In drawing-rooms young ladies affected the part of Mme. Dugazon, and threw themselves into every kind of hysteria.

The critics, at length, took up arms against this infatuation on the part of the public. They declared that the success of *Nina* was utterly incomprehensible, and proceeded to show that the

subject of the piece was monstrous, the libretto insipid, and the music detestable. The pedants bewailed the decay of art upon the stage; the wits turned the entire opera into ridicule. But wits, pedants and critics alike were ignored by the public, who continued to besiege the doors of the theatre.

On the night of the first representation, a poet who was present had improvised the following octave in honour of Dugazon in the part of the demented heroine:—

"Tous les cœurs sont émus à tes divins accords,
On ne sait qu' admirer ton génie et tes charmes.
Tu pleures, aussitôt tu fais couler mes larmes:
Qui donc resterait froid à tes brûlants transports?
Mais la toile se baisse et la pièce est finie.
O touchante Nina, sublime Dugazon,
Aussitôt cesse ta folie;
Mais moi, d'amour pour toi, j'ai perdu la raison!"

Such was, indeed, the first impression produced upon the public; and, night after night, this impression, despite the protests and lamentations of the critics, continued to deepen.

Never before had Mme. Dugazon risen to such a dazzling height; and, although she gained many

subsequent successes, the part of the love-sick lunatic remained the triumph of her life. It was said of *Nina* that "Marsollier had made the libretto, Dalayrac the music, and Dugazon the piece."

In due course she made a provincial tour in her favourite character, and everywhere renewed the success she had obtained in the capital. At every town she visited *fêtes* were held in her honour; and her journey from theatre to theatre resembled a royal progress.

On her return to Paris, she was so much the rage at the Comédie Italienne, so exclusively the attraction, that on the nights she did not appear the boxes were empty, and the whole theatre a desert.

Suddenly, in the spring of 1786, she set out for London, tempted, as some said, by English gold, but, in reality, led thither by a young man with whom she was desperately in love. The frequenters of the theatre mourned and bewailed her departure. The curtain of the hitherto crowded house now rose to empty benches, and the directors sent letter after letter to the actress imploring her to return. She replied simply that

she intended to remain where she was, and that her parts could be assigned to other actresses. The managers were in despair. They attempted to replace her, but the pit instantly revolted, and would endure no substitute. Neither the beautiful Pitrot, the pretty Lescot, nor the charming Colombe, could obtain a single plaudit. At length Dugazon condescended to return, and then once more the crowd surged to the theatre, the roof rang with applause, and the coffers filled with money.

No other actress could excite this enthusiasm, since none other possessed a talent so flexible and varied, so powerful and yet so exquisitely delicate. Her seductive *naïveté* in one scene, her impassioned force in another, defied all imitation.

That she was greater as an actress than as a vocalist is beyond doubt. "She is not a singer," said Grétry; "she is an actress who speaks song with the truest and most passionate accent." Perhaps, however, Grétry hardly meant that she was not a fine vocalist; for her voice, although limited in range, was pure, flexible, and of an

enchanting tone. Her musical education was, it is true, very incomplete; but this defect was far outweighed by her native endowments.

"What a wonderful woman," exclaimed Boiledieu, after a representation of the *Caliph of Bagdad.* "They say she does not know music; yet I never heard anyone sing with such taste and expression, such nature and fidelity."

Such, then, was the actress. As a woman, in private life, Mme. Dugazon possessed many amiable and brilliant qualities. She was witty, but without malevolence; and her sarcasms were neither barbed nor poisoned. All the authors who wrote for her remained to the last her sincere and devoted friends. Sedaine, Etienne, Marsollier, Dalayrac, Laujon, and many others, ever preserved for her an affectionate regard. She was always ready to aid them with her advice; and more than one dramatist, engaged on a new play, found some difficulty which he had imagined insurmountable vanish instantly upon a hint from the experienced actress. Bouilly declared that he owed everything to Mme. Dugazon.

Her nature was extremely disinterested. For

wealth she had no passion, and to the end of her life she remained poor. "At a time," says a biographer, "when Jupiters of all conditions solicited the honour of descending at her feet in a shower of gold, we find this actress so hampered for money as to write to a friend for the loan of fifty louis." Yet she was charitable to the utmost limit of her slender means, and relieved distress by more than one method.

In 1784 the winter was exceptionally rigorous, and the poor suffered great hardships. At the instance of Mme. Dugazon, special representations were announced for the benefit of the wretches who were perishing with cold and hunger; and the sum so raised was enormous. It was handed over to the Church for distribution.

"The Church," says Bachaumont, "was very grateful for this assistance. But she warned her curés that they must not touch money which came direct from the hands of an actress, and ordered that the alms should be purified by passing through the exchequer of the Lieutenant of Police."

This ingenious device for disposing of the casu-

istical difficulty inspired a humorist with some lively verses, in the shape of an epistle supposed to be addressed by St. Augustine to Mme. Dugazon and her associates. The lines, which deserve reproduction, ran thus:—

"Salut à ta troupe italique,
A ce comité catholique
Dont le cœur loyal s'attendrit
Sur la calamité publique !
C'est le fils de sainte Monique,
C'est Augustin qui vous écrit.
Oui, mes amis, par cette épître
J'abjure maint et maint chapitre
Où j'ai frondé votre métier
Comme un tant soit peu diabolique.

. . . . . .

Oui, sans être garant de rien,
Je croirais qu'un comédien
Risque, s'il est un homme de bien,
D'être sauvé tout comme un autre.
Un mime, en face d'un apôtre,
C'est un scandale, dira-t-on;
Saint Paul à côte de Rosière,
Trial vis-à-vis de Saint Pierre,
Et bien heureuse Dugazon
Aux pieds d'un diacre ou d'un vicaire—
Le paradis serait bouffon !
Tant pis pour qui s'en scandalise;
Allez au ciel par vos vertus
Et laissez clabauder l'Eglise."

While still at the zenith of her fame, Mme. Dugazon suddenly conceived a fancy for a new style of stage impersonation. She abandoned the character of unmarried heroine, and devoted herself exclusively to the representation of young matrons. Anxious to retain an actress who assured the success of whatever piece she acted in, authors yielded to her inclination, and furnished her with the parts she desired. Scandal did not omit to hint that there was a physical necessity for this new taste on her part; but, at all events, her success in the matronly style was phenomenal. It is said that her triumph in *Camille ou le souterrain* effaced that which she had achieved in *Nina*.

When the Revolution arrived, Mme. Dugazon could not see without grief the downfall of the royal family, whom she had always loved and venerated. At a time when so many persons were insulting the idols to which they had burned incense just before, she had the courage to manifest her true sentiments. Her heroism on this occasion is attested by a letter which was once in the possession of Mrs Elliot, an English-

woman still remembered by the passion with which she inspired the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Orleans.

"After the 20th of June 1792," says the writer, "those who wished well to the royal family urged the Queen to exhibit herself sometimes in public with the Dauphin, a beautifnl and interesting child, and her charming daughter, Mme. Royale.

"She went, therefore, to the Comédie Italienne with her two children, with Mme. Elizabeth, the King's sister, and with Mme. de Tourzel, the children's governess. This was the first time that the Queen appeared in public. I was in my box, just opposite that occupied by the Queen and suite; and as she was more interesting than the play, I kept my eyes constantly fixed upon her Majesty and the royal party.

"The opera represented was *Les Evènements imprévus*, and Mme. Dugazon sustained the part of the servant girl.

"Her Majesty, from the moment of her entrance, seemed profoundly sad. She was much affected

by the applause of the public, and I saw her frequently wipe her eyes.

"The little Dauphin, who sat the whole evening upon her knee, seemed anxious to learn the cause of his unhappy mother's tears, and she, in her turn, frequently caressed the child.

"There is a duet in the opera between the servant girl and the valet, in which Mme. Dugazon had to say the following lines:—

'J'aime mon maître tendrement,
Ah! combien j'aime ma maîtresse!'

"As the actress, when she uttered these verses, placed her hand upon her heart and looked towards the Queen, everyone present understood the allusion.

"Thereupon a number of Jacobins who were among the audience sprang upon the stage and, if the actors had not concealed Mme. Dugazon, would certainly have killed her. They drove the poor Queen and her suite from the box they occupied, and all that the guard could do was to put them safely into the royal carriages.

"In the meantime the Queen's party had hurled

themselves upon the Jacobins; but the soldiers intervened, and the affray had no serious results."

From that evening Mme. Dugazon scarcely ever appeared in public; and in 1792 she retired, under pretext of failing health, but in reality to avoid playing in pieces which were opposed to her principles.

At length, on the restoration of order, Mme. Dugazon decided to reappear; and her return was welcomed by the public with enthusiasm. The tempests of applause recalled the triumphs of her youthful days.

"An idolater of music," wrote one of the audience, "I was about to quit Paris post-haste for a spot where honour called me, when I broke my vows and remained in the capital, enchained by the fascinating accents of Mme. Dugazon."

At the time of her return to the Comédie Italienne she was simply a pensioner; but in 1801, when the two opera companies of Paris were united in one troop at the Feydeau Theatre, she became a regular member, and at the same time occupied a seat in the administrative council.

At length, in 1806, she retired finally from the stage. The Restoration was hailed with joy by Mme. Dugazon, who declared that she could now at last "die happy."

She went to Saint-Ouen, and was one of the first to obtain an audience of the King. Her emotion was great when she found herself in presence of Louis XVIII. She threw herself at his feet, bathed in tears. The King kindly raised her by the hand and said: "So you have not forgotten me? Nor shall I ever forget the pleasure you gave me at Versailles. I am very sorry the state of your health compels your retirement from the stage. I should be charmed to see you reappear."

After her interview with the King, little was heard of Mme. Dugazon. She lived in close retirement, surrounded only by a few intimate friends. Her whole affection was centred in her son Gustave, a young composer, the pupil of Berton and Gossec, who, at an early age, exhibited remarkable talent. He afterwards produced many operas; and such was his mother's anxiety for their success, that she is said to have invariably fallen

ill as the night of their first representation drew near.

She died in 1821. A large crowd followed her bier to the grave; and a funeral oration was pronounced by Bouilly, her devoted friend.

MADEMOISELLE CLAIRON.

THIS great actress, whose fame threw even the name of Adrienne Lecouvreur into the shade, was born at Condé, in the province of Hainaut, in 1723. She has herself told us how her ambition was first directed towards the stage. One day—it was a Sunday, and she was then eleven years old—her mother had shut her up, with her catechism and her needlework, in the loftiest and barest room of the house. Seated on a high chair, with her forehead resting against the window pane, the child watched the fleecy clouds as they flitted across the blue summer sky, and thought of the daisies and butterflies in the meadows, and of the happy children who were privileged to pick those daisies and chase

those butterflies. Suddenly a window opposite was opened, and a new spectacle, strange and delightful, presented itself to the eyes of the little girl. She saw the celebrated Mdlle. Dangeville taking a dancing lesson in the midst of an admiring family circle. At the end of the lesson everyone applauded, and Mdlle. Dangeville's mother embraced her. The young girl's triumph was purely a domestic one; but it had excited the admiration and envy of little Clairon, who resolved that she also would be a dancer. She was then at Rouen, and one evening, tired of being scolded and slapped, and resolved to make a career for herself, she left home and presented herself at the door of the Rouen Theatre, where she was received, and allowed to give some idea of her talents. She was ready to dance, sing and act; and so good an opinion did the manager form of her that she was forthwith engaged in a general way to play child's parts. After passing a year or two at Rouen, the young actress went to Lille, where an English general, during the intervals of a campaign, found time to fall in love with her. She declares in her *Memoirs* that she rejected

him from patriotic motives, and from her invincible passion for the stage. She told him that she belonged, in the first place, to France, and that, though she had no objection to live in a palace, she could not, under any circumstances, desert the theatre.

After moving from one theatre to another, and leaving a good impression wherever she was engaged, Mdlle. Clairon at last received an order to make her *début* at the Opera, where she first appeared as Venus in a work long since forgotten.

It was not, however, as a vocalist that Mdlle. Clairon was to make her greatest mark. She was born to shine in comedy; and though she undertook with success the leading parts in the tragedies of *Corneille* and *Racine,* it was in Molière's characters that she showed the perfection of her talent.

Small, slender, perfectly formed, and very graceful, Mdlle. Clairon is said, in representing dignified personages, to have looked tall and commanding; and whether she played serious or comic parts, the theatre was always full. One of her greatest admirers was Racine one of her best

friends Adrienne Lecouvreur. Among her guests were numbered Voltaire, Diderot, Vanloo and Louis XV. himself, together with Mme. de Chabrillant, Mme. d'Aiguillon, Mme. de Villeroy, Mme. Dudeffant, and the Princess Galitzin.

"What souvenir of myself shall I leave with you when I go back to Russia?" said the Princess one day.

"My portrait by Vanloo," replied the actress; and Vanloo thereupon painted her in the character of Medea.

Louis XV. called one day at Vanloo's studio to see how the portrait was progressing.

"How fortunute you are to have such a model!" he said to the artist; "and you," he added, turning to Mdlle. Clairon, "to be painted by such a master! I should like to have something to do with the work myself, and you must allow me to contribute the frame. The portrait, moreover, must be engraved. That also shall be my affair."

At the height of her reputation, her head slightly turned by the adulation offered to her on all sides, Mdlle. Clairon is said to have for-

gotten herself so far as to demand the imprisonment of a critic who had failed to admire her; and Fréron, the offender in question, would, but for an attack of gout, real or simulated, have been sent to For l'Evêque. Soon afterwards, by a caprice of fate, Mdlle. Clairon, accused of organising a cabal against a rival, was herself sent to For l'Evêque, where she held high court, receiving visits from all kinds of illustrious people, whose carriages are said to have made the approach to the prison impassable.

The most remarkable, however, of the imprisonments to which, like so many celebrated and capricious actresses, Mdlle. Clairon had, in the course of her career, to submit was the one to which she was condemned for refusing, from conscientious scruples, to appear any more on the stage. After seeking enlightenment on the point, she had come to the conclusion that dramatic performances, and all who took part in them, were condemned by the Church; and, rather than remain among the excommunicated, she determined to abandon her profession.

In the first ages of Christanity an excom-

munication was pronounced against the stage, pagan as it then doubtless was; and in France this excommunication had never, either in theory or in practice, been revoked.

At the first Council of Arles, held in 315, in presence of Pope Sylvester and the Emperor Constantine, actors were, by the fifth article, formally excommunicated. "Les acteurs," in the words of the Abbé Guettée, who cites the article in his *Histoire de l'Eglise de France* (Paris, 1847), Vol. I. page 64, "les acteurs de théâtre sont aussi excommuniés;" and the author complacently adds: "The Church, then, has never tolerated theatres and spectacles—those schools of immorality and corruption."

Bossuet, too, in the seventeenth century, condemned, in his *Lettre sur les Spectacles*, dramatic performances generally, on the ground that the gloom which forms the greater part of human life cannot be permanently dispelled by theatrical entertainments, but only by meditation and prayer. Bossuet's condemnation had been called forth by the publication, on the part of one of the priests of his disocese, of a preface to a

volume of plays, the priest himself having never, it is said, set foot within the walls of a playhouse.

Bossuet, moreover, objected to plays, on the ground that they generally turned upon the passion of love, which could not but have an inflammatory effect on the minds of the audience. When the innocent priest pleaded that there were plays in which there was no question of love, the Eagle of Meaux replied that "they must be exceedingly dull."

Finally, several examples have been given in these volumes of the refusal of Christian burial to French actors and actresses.

It was not to be wondered at that the primitive Fathers of the Church anathematised those authors and actors of their time who were not only pagans but open profaners of the true religion. "But why," it was asked, "should that excommunication still exist in France against a set of persons who were neither pagans nor profaners of religion; who acted plays which were filled with pure and virtuous sentiments, and in which virtue was rewarded and vice placed in its most odious light."

Mdlle. Clairon, in particular, was indignant at the ecclesiastical bann under which the stage still lay; and she raised a strong party in order to remove so great a scandal. Much was written and said in favour of the comedians; but all to no purpose. The priests stood firm to their text, and would by no means give up their ancient and pious privilege of consigning to perdition everyone who had anything to do with the stage.

Mdlle. Clairon, in consequence, quitted the theatre, and peremptorily refused to act any more; declaring that it was most unreasonable to expect her to continue her profession as an actress if it was to lead her to perdition.

This unexpected resolution on her part threw the managers into the utmost confusion. She was by far the best actress of the day, and such a favourite with the town that it was almost impossible to proceed without her. The theatre was soon practically deserted by the public; and, nevertheless, Mdlle. Clairon adhered to her determination. At length complaints were made of her behaviour at Court, and she was ordered to be imprisoned in the Bastille, on the ground that she

was a paid servant of the King, and had refused to do her duty.

"The case of this actress," said a journalist, "is somewhat hard. The King sends her to prison if she refuses to act, and the Church sends her to hell if she does."

She had not been long in the Bastille when an order came from the Court for the players to go to Versailles to perform before the King. Mdlle. Clairon was released, and commanded to make her appearance with the rest of the company. She decided to comply, being already, indeed, tired of the Bastille. She performed at Court with immense success, and, finding that all attempts to gain her point were vain, continued from that time to appear as usual on the stage.

Many pamphlets had, at the height of the dispute, been written on the side of the comedians; and one of the ablest of these, which proved, by the laws and constitutions of France, that the excommunication levelled against the stage was an unlawful and scandalous imposition, had no sooner made its appearance than it

was seized, and condemned to be burnt in the Place de Grève by the common hangman. The destruction of this pamphlet afterwards provoked a scathing tract, in the form of an imaginary dialogue between the master of the King's revels, as advocate for the players, and the Abbé Grizel, on the side of the Church. This work, although anonymous, was easily recognised as from the pen of Voltaire. It was, in due course, burned by the common hangman. This the writer seems to have anticipated; for he remarks in the tract that, if the hangman were presented with a complimentary copy of every work he was ordered to burn, he would soon possess a handsome and very valuable library.

The Memoirs and Reflections on the Dramatic Art, which Mdlle. Clairon published in her own lifetime, were originally intended as a posthumous work; and she had entrusted the manuscript to an intimate friend, who was not to deliver it to the printer until ten years after her death. Some spurious version, however, of the work having got into circulation, she was obliged to publish an authentic edition in her own defence.

As to the *Memoirs,* they are chiefly remark-

able for a strange but extremely circumstantial ghost-story, of which Mdlle. Clairon herself is the heroine. She tells us how her life was haunted by the shade of a young man whose passion she had slighted, and who, as he died broken-hearted, vowed with his last breath to return from his grave in order to disturb her peace of mind. Here, however, in her own words, is the extraordinary tale:—

"In the year 1743, my youth, and the success with which I had appeared at the Opera and at the French Theatre, procured me a considerable number of admirers, among whom were several worthy and estimable characters. M. de S., son of a merchant of Brittany, about thirty years of age, and possessing a handsome figure, with a cultivated understanding, was one of those who had made the deepest impression on me. His manners evinced the education of a gentleman, and of one used to the best society. His reserve and timidity, which scarcely allowed him to explain himself even by his looks, made me distinguish him from among all my lovers. After I had been

some time the object of his attentions, I permitted his visits at my house, and left him no room to doubt the friendship with which he had inspired me. Perceiving that I was of an easy and tender disposition, he was patient, trusting that time would produce in my breast a stronger sentiment than that of friendship. 'Who can tell?' 'Who can say what may happen?' Such were his frequent remarks; but by answering with candour all the questions which my reason or my curiosity dictated, he entirely ruined his cause. Ashamed of being the son of a merchant, he had disposed of his effects in order to expend the product at Paris under a more elevated title. This displeased me. To blush for himself seemed to me to justify the disdain of others. His humour was gloomy and melancholy. 'He was too well acquainted with men,' he would say, 'not to despise and shun them.' His plan was to live only for me, and that I should live only for him; that displeased me still more, as you may well imagine. I might have been content to be restrained by a garland of flowers, but could not bear to be confined by a chain. I saw from that

moment the necessity of destroying the flattering hope which nourished his attachment, and of disallowing his frequent visits. This determination, which I persisted in, produced a serious indisposition, during which I paid him every possible attention. But my constant refusal to indulge the passion he entertained for me made the wound still deeper; and, unfortunately, his brother-in-law, to whom he had given a power of attorney to receive the property he was entitled to from the sale of his effects, left him in such extreme want of money that he was compelled to accept such loans as I could accommodate him with. This circumstance was a deep mortification to him. You will perceive, my dear Henry, the importance of keeping this secret in your bosom. I respect his memory, and would not abandon it to the insulting pity of mankind. Preserve the same religious silence which I have now for the first time violated, but only out of my profound esteem for you.

"At length he recovered his memory, but never his health. I considered his absence from me would be to his advantage and therefore constantly refused both his letters and his visits.

"Two years and a half passed between our first acquaintance and his death. He entreated me to assuage by my presence the last moments of his life. My engagements prevented me from complying with his request. He died in the presence of his domestics and an old lady whom he had alone for some time suffered to attend him. He then lodged upon the Rampart, near la Chausée d'Antin, which had just begun to be built. I resided in the Rue de Bussy, near the Rue de Seine and Abbey of Saint Germain. My mother and several of my friends generally supped with me. My visitors were an Intendant of the Privy Purse, whose friendship was of infinite service to me; the good Pipelet, whom you formerly knew and admired; and Roseley, one of my companions at the theatre, a young man of respectable birth and talents. The suppers of that period, though the company was small, were much more entertaining than the most expensive *fêtes* have been for these forty years past. It was at one of those suppers, and when I had been singing an air with which my friends expressed themselves delighted, that, just as the clock struck eleven, our ears were startled

by the most piercing cry I had ever heard; its long continuance and piteous sound astonished everyone. I fainted away, and was nearly a quarter of an hour insensible.

"The Intendant was amorous and jealous. When I revived, he said to me, with some degree of spleen, that 'the signals of my rendezvous were somewhat too noisy.' I answered that 'I was mistress of myself, and at liberty to receive at all hours whoever I thought proper. Signals, therefore, would be altogether useless;' and, I added, that the shriek which the Intendant called a signal was of too dreadful a nature to announce the soft moments dedicated to love. My paleness, the tremor which still remained upon me, the tears which flowed in spite of my efforts, and my entreaties that the company would remain with me a part of the night, convinced them that I was ignorant of the cause that had produced the noise. We reasoned as to what could have occasioned it, and determined to set people to watch in the street, in order to discover the cause, in case it should occur again.

"Everyone in the house, my friends, my neigh-

bours, the police even, have heard the same sort of cry repeated under my windows at the same hour, and appearing to proceed from the air. There was no doubt of its being intended for my hearing in particular, for though I rarely supped in town, yet when I did the cry was never heard; but often, when I was conversing with my mother and my servants upon the subject, it would burst forth in the midst of us. One evening the President de B., at whose house I had supped, conducted me to my own house. As he was wishing me good-night at my door the cry alarmed us. He, as well as nearly all Paris, can vouch for the truth of this history. The President was so terrified that he was conducted to his carriage more dead than alive.

"Another time I asked my friend Roseley to accompany me to the Rue Saint Honoré, to buy some articles of dress, and pay a visit to Mdlle. Saint P., who lodged near the Porte St Denis. The only subject of our conversation was the spirit, as he called it. This young man, though he ridiculed my adventure, was struck with the singularity of it. He pressed me to invoke the

phantom, and promised to give full belief to it if it answered me. Whether it was owing to my weakness or daring boldness, I know not, but I did as he requested me. The same cry was uttered three different times, with a degree of rapidity and shrillness terrible beyond expression. When we arrived at our friend's house, we were obliged to have assistance to get out of the coach, where we were found sitting in a state of terror and insensibility.

"After this scene, I remained some months without hearing anything of it. I thought I was quit of it for ever, but I deceived myself.

"All the theatrical exhibitions had been ordered to Versailles, on account of the marriage of the Dauphin. We were to repair there in three days, and for some of the actresses lodgings had been secured. Others, however, had none; among them being Mme. Granvalle. She remained with me, expecting in vain that a room would be procured for her. At three in the morning I offered to share my chamber with her. It had two beds, one for myself, and another for my servant. She accepted my offer, and I gave her the smaller of the two,

and got into my own. While my servant was undressing herself to be by my side, I said to her, 'We are now almost at the end of the world, and, besides, the weather being unusually tempestuous, the cry would be rather embarrassed to find us out here.' It was at that instant uttered. Mme. Granvalle thought all the demons of hell were in the room. She ran in her chemise from the top to the bottom of the house, and suffered no one to sleep during the remainder of the night. This, however, was the last time I was troubled with the sound.

"Seven or eight days afterwards, when I was enjoying myself in my usual society, the clock struck eleven, and immediately the firing of a gun was heard against one of my windows. We were all sensible of it, we saw the fire and heard the report; but, upon examination, the window had received no kind of damage. We concluded that some person had a design upon my life, and that, one having failed, it was necessary to guard against a similar attempt in the future. The Intendant went at once to the house of M. de Murville, the Lieutenant of Police, who was his

friend. He came, accompanied by proper officers, and examined the house opposite mine, but without discovering any ground for suspicion. The following day the street was narrowly watched; the officers of police had their eyes upon every house, but, notwithstanding all their attention, there occurred the same discharge, at the same hour, and against the same frame of glass, for three whole months, though no one could ever discover from whence it proceeded. This fact is attested by all the registers of police.

"I became so accustomed to this new trick of the spirit which had before haunted me, that I no longer paid attention to it; and one evening, at the hour of eleven, when it was extremely warm, I opened the window, and the Intendant and myself leaned over the balcony. The instant the clock struck eleven the gun was discharged there, and we both fell flat on our faces, as if lifeless. When we came to ourselves, and found that we were not hurt, and acknowledged to each other that at the moment the gun was fired we had each of us received a violent slap on the face, we could scarcely refrain from laugh-

ing at the circumstance. The next day nothing particular happened. But the day after I was invited by Mdlle. Dumesnil to an entertainment she gave. I entered a coach at eleven o'clock with my waiting-woman. The moon shone bright, and we proceeded along the boulevards or suburbs, which were just then beginning to be built upon We were examining the houses which had lately been erected, when my waiting-maid said, 'Is it not here that M. de S. died?' 'From the information he gave me, that should be the place,' I replied, pointing with my finger to a house which was before me. The explosion of a gun was immediately heard; the coachman urged forward his horses, conceiving himself attacked by robbers, and arrived at his destination scarcely sensible. For my part, I was impressed with a degree of terror from which I did not for a long time recover. This was the last time I was terrified by the firing of the gun.

"It was, however, succeeded by a noise like the clapping of hands. The partiality of the public had so long accustomed me to this interruption that I for some time paid no attention to it. My

friends remarked it, and told me they constantly heard it at eleven o'clock close to my door. They could distinguish no one, and were convinced that what they heard must have been the result of some supernatural cause.

"As the noise had nothing terrible in it, I did not observe what length of time it continued. It was followed by melodious sounds, to which I paid as little attention. It seemed that a celestial voice sang the most tender and pathetic airs. The music commenced at the corner of the street, and concluded at the door of my house. Like all the preceding sounds which had been heard, it baffled all discovery as to the cause. At the end of about two years I ceased altogether to be disturbed.

"The house I inhabited was extremely noisy, on account of its proximity to the market, and the number of people who lived in that quarter. I required retirement for my studies as well as for my health, which was much impaired. I was in rather easy circumstances, and wished for a better situation. I was told of a small house in the Rue des Marais, which let for two hundred francs,

where Racine was said to have lived forty years with his family. I was informed that it was there that he had composed his immortal works, and that there he died; that, afterwards, it had been occupied by the tender Lecouvreur, who had ended her days in it. 'The walls of the house,' I reflected, 'will be alone sufficient to make me feel the sublimity of the author, and acquire the talents necessary for an actress; it is in this sanctuary that I will live and die.' I took it, and put a bill up in the apartments I had before occupied. Among the number who applied for them were several persons attracted solely by curiosity. The public had never seen me out of the theatre. They wished to behold me divested of a crown, and, unsupported by the characters of Corneille, Racine and Voltaire, reduced to the rank of an ordinary woman. I flattered myself that the alteration would not show to my prejudice, as I still retained the same sentiments and habits; but I was rather short of stature, and I was supposed by those who had never seen me off the stage to be six feet high. At home I appeared in my natural form. I never had re-

course to art except at the theatre: I was fearful that, when surveyed off the stage, the public would diminish twice as much from my stature as I had been accustomed to add to it. I felt that those who avoided imposing upon the world had nothing to fear from its censure. Happily, my nation is not given much to reflection, and I had the satisfaction of finding that the public still continued to preserve the same opinion with regard to my figure.

"I was informed that an elderly lady wished to see my apartments, and that she was waiting there for me. It has ever been my principle to show the greatest deference to age. I attended her. An emotion of which I was not mistress made me survey her from head to foot. This emotion increased when I perceived that she experienced the same feelings. I was only able to request her to take a seat, and she accepted my offer. We continued some time silent; but our eyes left no room to doubt the extreme desire we had to address each other. She knew who I was, but I was unacquainted with her, and she felt that the task was imposed upon her of breaking

silence. The following was the conversation which took place between us:—

"'I have long, madam,' she said, 'been impressed with the most anxious desire to make your acquaintance. As I never frequent the theatre, and am unknown to those whom you honour with your friendship, I was apprehensive that, if I addressed you by letter, I might subject myself to a denial, in consequence of my motives being misunderstood. The bill placed upon your apartments procured me the happiness I wished for. Pardon me when I confess that it is not that which has brought me here. I am not rich enough to take them. Nevertheless, I entreat you to let me see them. The place you have inhabited cannot but excite interest. Your talents have a degree of celebrity which leaves no room to doubt the superior endowments of your mind. I perceive that I have not been deceived as to your figure. I desire to know if the description I have received of your dwelling is as faithful; and I trust you will allow me to pursue my unhappy friend through all the scenes of his hope and despair.'

"'It appears to me, madam,' I replied, 'that the agitation in which you behold me, and which every word you utter augments, makes it a duty I owe to myself to inquire who you are, of whom you are speaking, and what your business is with me. My character will not allow me to be made the sport or the victim of anyone. Speak, or I shall leave you.'

"'I, madam,' she replied, 'was the best friend of M. de S., and the only person he suffered to be with him during the last moments of his life. We have both reckoned the days and hours while speaking of you: sometimes making you an angel, sometimes a devil—I continually persuading him to forget you, he constantly professing that he should adore you to the grave. Your eyes bathed in tears, allow me to ask you why you rendered him so miserable, and how, possessing a tender and sympathetic soul, you could refuse him the consolation of seeing you, and of speaking to you for once only before he died.'

"'We cannot command our hearts,' I replied. 'M. de S. was possessed of merit and of many estimable qualities; but his gloomy, thoughtful

and despotic disposition made me equally dread his society, his friendship and his love. To have made him happy, I must have renounced the pleasures of society, and even the exercise of my profession. I was poor and proud. I wished (and I hope I shall always possess the same disposition) not to depend upon anyone but myself. The friendship with which he inspired me made me attempt every means to induce him to adopt sentiments more tranquil and equitable. As I could not effect this, and was persuaded that his derangement was less to be attributed to the excess of his passion than to the violence of his character, I formed and kept a firm resolution of separating myself entirely from him. I refused to see him in his last moments because the sight of him would have rent my heart; and I should have appeared too cruel had I refused him what he asked, while I must have been wretched had I granted it. These. madam, were the motives of my conduct. I dare flatter myself no one will blame me.'

"'To condemn you,' she replied, 'would be unjust. It is only to our God, our parents and our

benefactors that we are bound to sacrifice ourselves. On this last point, I am satisfied that it was not from you that gratitude was due; but his situation and his passion overcame him, and your last refusal hastened his last moments. He counted every minute till half-past ten, when his servant positively informed him that you would not come to him. After a moment he took my hand in a paroxysm of despair which terrified me, and exclaimed, "*Cruel woman! But she shall gain nothing. I will pursue her as much after my death as I have during my life.*" I endeavoured to calm him, but he was no more.'

"I think I need not describe the effect which these last words had upon me. I thought all the powers of heaven and earth had united to torment my wretched life. But at length time and mature reason have restored calmness to my soul. 'If,' said I, 'there is no superior Being who directs this world, it is impossible that one who is dead can be brought back to life. If there is a God —and all Nature attests that He exists—the attributes of His divinity are justice and goodness. He will never, then, send into this abode of misery and

sorrow those whom He has deigned to release from it. What am I that I should suppose He concerns Himself with so humble an individual? How can I suppose that on my account He would derange the order of Nature to manifest His anger or His goodness, or to point out to me the means of avoiding misery or guilt? Such cares may be worthy of the Sovereign of the world when the whole human race is the object of them; but an individual is perhaps less in His eyes than a grain of sand in ours. Let us adore Him, let us merit His mercies; but let us not attempt to scrutinise His ways.'

"By this mode of reasoning, and by various reflections which occurred to my mind, I attributed the extraordinary circumstances which had so terrified me entirely to chance. I know not but they were the effect of chance; but I cannot deny that what is so called has the greatest influence on what passes in the world."

MADEMOISELLE CONTAT.

In the year 1874 Beaumarchais had just completed his famous *Marriage of Figaro.* If it was a difficult task to write such a masterpiece; to get it acted proved more difficult still. "I will not allow that piece to be played," said the King. His Majesty's words were repeated to Beaumarchais. "It shall be played!" was the author's exclamation.

It required all Beaumarchais' genius to circumvent the royal mandate. How he succeeded, how he gained the Queen, flattered one high official, defied another, until at length the work was brought to rehearsal, and, in the end, after a

hundred obstacles, to public representation, is sufficiently well known.

The famous first night was at hand. Ten hours before the box-office was open, the doors of the Comédie Française were besieged. The entire Court, the princes of the blood, the members of the royal family, pressed for places. At eleven o'clock in the morning the footmen of the Duchess de Montespan posted themselves at the theatre door to await the distribution of tickets. The miserly Mme. de Talleyrand paid three times the usual price in order to secure a box. The soldiers employed to keep back the crush were simply lost in the crowd, and vainly elbowed their way about with the grooms and valets.

The night at length arrived, and the curtain rose upon Beaumarchais' masterpiece. The audience was simply a gorgeous array of courtiers and celebrities. The ladies' silks rustled; the boxes were ablaze with diamonds. The success of the piece was incredible, and surpassed the wildest dreams of both the author and the actors. The first twenty representations produced upwards of a hundred thousand francs.

"I know of only one thing madder than my piece," said Beaumarchais; "that is, its success."

The critics, however, attacked the play with acrimony. They declared it absurd, immoral, monstrous. Its author was pronounced an impudent knave, a rascal, an intriguer. Beaumarchais simply laughed, and declared himself flattered by the abuse. The satires and songs which were directed against him disturbed the great author so very little that, it is said, he himself composed a violent epigram against the play, reciting it everywhere, and saying that he had written it to encourage his enemies, who were not half up to their business, and did not revile him nearly enough.

It was the *Marriage of Figaro* which first revealed to the public the extraordinary talent, so flexible and so exquisite, of an actress who had hitherto remained in the shade. In this work Mdlle. Contat gained the first of her triumphs.

Beaumarchais, who was quick to recognise talent, had detected the high qualities of this actress

in the minor parts she had already played. He decided, therefore, to entrust her with the character of Suzanne. His decision greatly surprised the whole company of actors, and roused violent protests. Mdlle. Fanneer, who had played servant-girl parts with no small success, wrote to him for the new part, which, as it was in her particular line, she held to be her legitimate property. But Beaumarchais was absolute at the theatre. He maintained his choice, and he had no cause afterwards to repent it.

It was the servant girl, as rendered by Mdlle. Contat, that chiefly delighted and transported the gorgeous assembly at the Comédie Française. Such a delicious little hussy, such a pretty rogue, such an arch coquette, had never been seen on the stage before.

Louise Contat was twenty-four years of age when she created the part of Suzanne. She was then at the zenith of her talent, and in the flush of her beauty. Her figure, it should be said, was admirably proportioned; and she had a native air of high distinction. When, in the part of a servant girl, she sometimes, after the manner

of a servant girl, assumed the fine lady, she would have passed for a duchess or a princess. She had large eyes, alternately languishing or flashing with mischief. Her whole countenance was piquant and animated. She possessed a beautiful set of teeth, which she revealed from time to time in one of her exquisite smiles.

"She is an admirable Venus," said a pamphlet of the time, "cut by some great sculptor from a block of the purest marble; only he had not time to finish his masterpiece, and confided the hands and feet to one of his workmen." Her hands and feet did, indeed, leave something to be desired. But she knew how to dissimulate this imperfection, and on the stage it passed unnoticed.

Born at Paris on the 17th June 1760, Louise Contat was pronounced an actress before she was six months old. It was on the boards of a theatre that she learned to walk, and she still lisped when she was taught to spell her childish parts. At the age of eleven she would have set out on tour with a wandering theatrical troupe had not the actress Mme. Préville rescued her from the life of miserable vagrancy by which she was threatened.

She adopted the little girl herself, and it was she and her husband, an actor of renown, who first trained the child in a methodical manner to the stage. The wife, it is true, was not a preceptress calculated to develop youthful genius. Her own style was stiff and mechanical, and under her tuition the talent of the little girl was likely to be cramped. On the other hand, her husband was a true artist, who took Nature for his ideal, and it was his chief care to see that the child's genius had unfettered play. "Not," said Fleury, "that she did not herself discover the secrets of an art which, as a matter of fact, cannot be taught." But Préville, while he gave free scope to her natural bent, taught her that stage mechanism which, as Fleury happily observes, "it is necessary to learn in order to appear in public, but still more necessary to forget if one wishes to succeed."

It was on the 3d of February 1776 that the charming Louise Contat made her *début* as Atilade in *Bajazet*. Her early appearances, which, however, were confined to tragedy, made little impression. Tragedy was by no means her forte.

"Mdlle. Contat has just made her *début*," wrote Laharpe, "with a pretty face, but no voice, and little talent." Grimm was hardly more favourable. "She is mediocre," he said, "in tragedy, and is marred by mannerism; but she has an agreeable face and lustrous eyes."

As to her beauty everyone was agreed. But some gift besides beauty was necessary for success; and although Mdlle. Contat possessed this gift, it as yet lay dormant. Managers, indeed, would not give her the parts she required; and for many years she was condemned to the tragic style, in which none of her qualities could reveal themselves.

Mdlle. Contat was too beautiful to want, even at an early age, a host of admirers. Her first love affair was sufficiently unfortunate. The successful suitor was a certain M. de Lubsac, an officer of the King's household. He was a man of inferior birth with an empty purse; but he was as handsome as Apollo, and a wit into the bargain. He laid such persistent siege to the actress that she at length yielded in sheer weakness to his importunity.

De Lubsac was distinguished by two vices. He loved wine and cards. His passion for play was so reckless that he one night staked his beautiful mistress, or, at least, put to hazard the whole of her diamonds and trinkets. He lost, and the next day, just as Mdlle. Contat was about to attend a *fête*, she looked for her jewellery in vain. The caskets were all empty; a clean sweep had been made of everything. She set up a cry of "thieves," and called in the police. De Lubsac thought it discreet to silence her by a free confession of his "fault." He admitted that he had pledged the whole of the missing property. She was furious, and de Lubsac expressed the deepest contrition.

"Ah!" he cried, wringing his hands, "if I only had a few louis at this moment I could repair everything!"

"How?" cried Mdlle. Contat, with a sudden gleam of hope.

"Why, to-night," replied Lubsac, "I feel that my luck is in. I should win everything back. But I have not a solitary sou."

The repentance of the criminal was so comic

that it touched the actress's heart. Presently she smiled, then she laughed outright. In the end she lent the gambler a couple of louis, the last she had in the world, and he hurried off to the gaming-table. In less than an hour he returned triumphant. He had won. He brought back the whole of the jewellery, which he had taken out of pawn, and he had a few louis in his pocket besides.

It was impossible to be too severe with such a man. The actress, however, could not put up with him many months. He at length proved such a desperate rake that she dismissed him in disgust. Some time afterwards he returned, and threw himself once more at her feet; but she ordered him out of her presence, and dared him ever to have the impertinence to address her again.

She was perhaps tired of so penurious a lover. Her next choice fell upon the Marquis de Maupeon, who was rich, and violently in love with her. He was lavish with his money, and denied her nothing. He furnished a house for her, loaded her with presents, decorated her with price-

less diamonds. He bowed down to her, moreover, like a slave, and yielded without a murmur to her slightest caprice.

At last she grew tired of him. He was dismissed. His successor was no less a personage than a prince of the blood, the Count d'Artois, the first gentleman in France next to the King. "At that period," says a writer, "what woman would have resisted the advances of a prince of the blood? For an actress to have done so would have been regarded as high treason."

The actress found the Prince sufficiently munificent. But her extravagance was such that she would soon have ruined him had he left her the full control of his purse. At length, to put a check upon her reckless expenditure, he pleaded poverty.

The actress now determined to practise a trick upon him in order to revive his generosity.

On a piece of stamped paper she forged a legal warrant, by which it appeared that she was required to pay a debt of ten thousand francs. This document she left, as though by accident, upon her mantelpiece, and the next time His Royal

Highness called upon her he caught sight of it, and wished to read it. The actress pretended to snatch it away from him, but at length—with apparent reluctance—yielded to his curiosity.

He inspected the judgment, said she was very wrong not to have taken him into her confidence, promised to take the debt upon himself, and carried off the document. The next day he sent her, not the ten thousand francs, but another legal document, which provided that the warrant should not be put into force for the space of a year.

This royal piece of trickery threw Mdlle. Contat into a state of fierce indignation. The Prince, however, had simply indulged in a little joke, and the next day he made his peace with a magnificent present.

The constancy of the royal lover was of no long duration. He was volatile. A bird of fine plumage, he presently showed that he could use his wings and escaped from the cage of the enchantress.

Meanwhile, the actor Fleury was very much attached to his fair associate. His regard for her was more disinterested than that of her other

admirers; and he remained to the last her sincere and devoted friend. He speaks of her in his *Memoirs* as a "good and excellent sister."

To Mdlle. Contat he was indebted for his first successful part, one which made his whole reputation as a comedian. With the piece in which this part occurs the actress had become acquainted in rather a romantic way.

She was out one day in her carriage, and, after the fashion then prevalent amongst ladies, was driving herself, when, holding the reins with a good deal more grace than skill, she nearly ran over a pedestrian on the Pont-Neuf. Although she was in the wrong, she reproached her unwilling victim with having deliberately attempted to throw himself under her horse's feet. The pedestrian gallantly took the whole blame upon himself, bowed to the ground, offered the lady an apology, paid her an elegant compliment, and disappeared. Directly he had gone, the actress felt convinced, from his courtly manners and distinguished air, that he must be a personage of high rank, and she was, for a long time, curious to know who he really was. One night, about a month

after the incident, when she was at the theatre, a letter from the mysterious stranger was delivered to her. He proved to be no less than a prince —Prince Henry, brother of the King of Prussia— and himself a friend of the drama. He had written to beg the "modern Athalie" to do him the honour to preside at the rehearsal of a new piece in which he was interested. Partly to hear the piece, but chiefly to oblige the man whom she had been on the point of killing, she complied with his request.

The piece was a comedy with airs, written by Baron Ernest de Manteufel, with music from the pen of Dezède. The subject was extremely interesting, and Mdlle. Contat saw that this operetta would prove an immense success at the Théâtre Français, where, too, it would supply Fleury with a part in which he might make a great sensation. To the Théâtre Français the piece was accordingly transported, and it amply fulfilled the actress's anticipations. *Les deux Pages* was a prodigious triumph, and Fleury made of the hero, Frederick the Great, a masterpiece which placed him in the first rank of his profession.

This was in the year 1788, when Mdlle. Contat was at the height of her fame, and when the authors and composers who bowed down at her feet knew that to have secured her patronage for a new piece was beforehand to have conquered the public. A few years previously she was less famous by her talent than by her reckless life and her independence of spirit. Until her creation of the part of Suzanne, her stage triumphs were comparatively meagre. As Julie in *L'Impatient,* as the Countess in the *Rendezvous,* as Sophie in the *Vieux Garçon,* she had pleased a few connoisseurs rather than impressed the public at large; but the *Marriage of Figaro* revealed to her and to everyone her true bent as an actress. It was in high comedy that she was supreme and without a rival; and to this province she now resolved to confine herself. In her hands the fan became a sceptre. She had a seductive voice, an eloquent eye, an exquisite smile; everything, in a word, which could enchant an audience in this style of impersonation. None of the characteristics of good breeding had escaped her; and from head to foot her distinction was perfect.

Her Paris triumphs were in due time repeated in the provinces. The tours she made were one long series of ovations. At Marseilles crowns and wreaths were showered at her feet, and thousands of complimentary stanzas were composed in her honour. One of these may be here reproduced.

"Hier un enfant d'Helicon
D'un secret important m'a donné connaissance.
Ami, les neuf sœurs d'Apollon
N'ont pas toujours été si chastes que l'on pense;
Thalie (ah! qui l'eût cru ?), sans bruit et sans éclat,
A deux enfants donna naissance;
L'un est Molé, l'autre est Contat."

At Lyons the enthusiasm was not less great, and it was still further heightened when the actress gave for the benefit of the poor a performance which realised a sum of nearly four thousand francs.

At Toulouse she had arranged to give ten representations. But an eleventh and a twelfth scarcely sufficed to content the enthusiastic public; and the proceeds of these extra performances she distributed to the poor of Barèges, where she went to take the waters.

Although detractors accused her of ostentation, she seems to have been genuinely charit-

able. When on one occasion she visited an asylum for the blind, and inscribed her name on the list of benefactors, a blind inmate improvised an ingenious quatrain, in which he told her that she should not so much pity those who had lost their eyes as those who had been made wretched by the lustre of her own. Here are the lines:—

"Digne soutien de l'aimable Thalie,
Sur notre sort pourquoi vous attendrir?
S'il est quelques mortels qui maudissent la vie,
Ce sont ceux que vos yeux ont réduits à souffrir!"

It cannot be denied, however, that in one form of charity this actress was somewhat deficient. She could not endure a rival on the stage. Jealous of her own parts, she would allow no one else to play high comedy heroines, except in case of her absence from the theatre.

Mdlle. Vanhove, who had acquired a certain reputation, caused the great Suzanne a good deal of anxiety. Against this rival she attempted to play off her sister Emilie Contat, to whom she was always deeply attached. Emilie was a deplorable actress, and, notwithstanding the sisterly influence at work behind her, had no sooner en-

tered the lists against Mdlle. Vanhove than she was completely crushed. Mdlle. Contat had forgotten that, although she could give her sister parts to play, she could not furnish her with talent. She, nevertheless, made subsequent attempts to reinstate Emilie on the boards, in opposition both to Mdlle. Vanhove and Mdlle. Mimi. By these endeavours she drew upon herself many violent reproaches in prose and verse. The following lines among others were evoked at the time:—

"Le Théâtre Français a besoin de recrues
Qui promettent, surtout, et qui ne soient pas grues.
Vous voulez écarter Vanhove du théâtre;
Pour en venir à bout vous prenez le haut ton,
Et prétendez nous faire avaler le goujon.
Je vous déclare ici qu'on ne souffira pas
Que Mimi sur Vanhove usurpe enfin le pas."

To this feeble attack Mdlle. Contat replied; and for some time the quarrel continued, both in the public prints and behind the scenes at the theatre. Marie-Antoinette, who had taken Mdlle. Vanhove under her patronage, secured for her a part which Mdlle. Contat had endeavoured to obtain for her sister. When the actress herself, a queen at the theatre, learned that her own

desire had been subordinated to the royal wish, she exclaimed: "This Queen has a great deal of influence!"

This, however, was said in a mere moment of pique. Mdlle. Contat was much attached to the royal family. One day the Queen, who wished to assist at a representation of the *Gouvernante*, sent word to Mdlle. Contat that she should like to see her play the principal part in the piece. This part was suited neither to the age nor to the talent of the lively actress; but she nevertheless promised obedience, and at once began to learn the five hundred verses of which the part consists. In two days this was accomplished, and she played the character with wonderful success. Soon afterwards, in a letter she wrote to a friend, she alludes to her rapid study of the part in these words: "I did not know before which was the seat of memory—I find it is the heart." This letter, published by order of the Queen, proved almost fatal to Mdlle. Contat, when, in '93, she was arrested, with the whole of her company. By a miracle, however, she escaped the guillotine.

The Revolution put a temporary check on her career. Subsequently she appeared on the stage, with Fleury, at Bordeaux. Here the display of her talents transported the public to a positive frenzy, both inside and outside the theatre. Crowds gathered at the stage door to witness her departure at the end of the performances. They surrounded her, followed her with such shouts, such a clamour, that at once delighted and alarmed. She would cling closer to Fleury's side, and say to him with an air of comic gravity: "My dear friend, these people quite enchant me. Had we not better call the guard?"

On the re-establishment of the Comédie Française, Contat resumed her position in the company, and at once reconquered her former popularity. Indeed, under the Directory, she was more than ever adored by the public, and in particular by the gilded youth of the capital, who literally "swore by her."

Mdlle. Contat, having herself escaped the "national knife," by no means forgot in her hour of need those of her friends who lay under the shadow of the guillotine.

She had once coquetted with aristocrats, with princes of the blood. She knew how to flirt with savage patriots, and is said to have played her fan with effect on more than one of the tyrants who held the fate of her old admirers in their hands.

Under the Empire her reputation ascended, if possible, higher still. Napoleon greatly admired her talent. She was the leading figure in that theatrical troupe which he employed on his campaigns, to follow up his victories with the sword by a victory before the footlights, or, at least, to cause some newly conquered town to forget the sword in the solace of the drama.

At length, after a career of thirty-four years, Mdlle. Contat retired from the stage. She had married a few months before an estimable man, to whom she was sincerely devoted: Parny, that is to say, nephew of the poet.

In her retreat from the world, their mutual attachment showed no tendency to diminish; and her life promised to flow on to the end in a tranquil stream. But already a malady, which never spares its victim, had secretly attacked her. She

had cancer in the breast, and she soon learned—by an accident—what the physicians attempted to disguise from her: that her doom was sealed.

Her own physician, who hesitated to deal with so grave a case himself, advised her to consult the famous Dubois. She at once paid him a visit, and Dubois, when he had examined her, promised to confer with her private doctor, and to prescribe to him a definite mode of treatment. She was, accordingly, to pay a visit to her own doctor three days afterwards, and she duly presented herself at his surgery. He asked her to take a seat, and, promising to return to her in an instant, quitted the room. Left by herself, she glanced round the surgery, and happened to catch sight of a paper which bore her name. As it was a mere prescription, it did not much excite her curiosity; but half-concealed behind it lay another paper, which also bore her name, and which she ventured to examine. It was the report which Dubois had drawn up on her case. It informed her doctor that the patient was doomed; that a painful operation might be attempted, but that nothing on earth could save her.

The unhappy woman fell back in a swoon. Dubois was sent for, and secretly cursed himself for having omitted to take the report away in his pocket. He restored the unhappy woman to consciousness, showed her affectionate kindness, and even tried to solace her with a ray of hope, but the effect of the cruel shock remained.

Mdlle. Contat, however, lingered on for two years. She bore her sufferings with heroism, and disguised them from the friends about her by an air of gaiety; forcing a laugh in order to suppress a groan. At length, after five months of terrible agony, she expired on the 9th of March 1813.

MADEMOISELLE RAUCOURT.

CHAPTER I.

Madame Francoise-Marie-Antoinette Clairien was born at Dombasles, November 29th, 1755. The father of the future theatrical queen was a poor village barber, with more children than he knew how to feed. He accordingly handed over one of his girls to the local postmaster, who consented to adopt her. But the postmaster was not much better off than the barber; and having, after a time, become bankrupt, he fled from his native place, abandoning his wife and his own children, but taking with him his adopted daughter, who was henceforth to pass as his own child.

Saucerotte was the rascal's true name, who, finding himself one day absolutely without resources, joined a company of travelling actors, and came out in tragedy under the name of Raucourt. Gradually he made his way to Paris, where he obtained an engagement, and was allowed to appear in the important part of Mithridates. He did so, however, without success, and had promptly to retrace his steps to the obscure regions which he ought never to have left.

There is no doubt about M. Raucourt's having been a deplorable actor. He could boast of a formidable voice, which, according to one of his biographers, would have been very useful for raising a cry of fire, but was not effective on the stage. He was really proud of it, however; and the lower notes of his sonorous organ drowned, when he was on the stage, the utterances of all the other actors.

Once, when he was acting at Lyons, he had to deliver some long passages of dialogue in association with an actor named Lasozelière, who had a very feeble voice, and whom, for that reason, Raucourt spurned and ridiculed. He assured him, moreover, that he had no chance of success.

On the night of the performance Raucourt, determined to crush his rival, shouted and roared. Lasozelière, on the other hand, lowered his voice, while still contriving to make himself distinctly heard. The contrast was not advantageous to Raucourt, whose loud, ponderous tones caused him to be well hissed. Coming to the conclusion that his own countrymen would never appreciate him at his true value, Raucourt now went to Spain, where not only he but also his adopted daughter appeared as members of a travelling French company.

The little girl made a good impression, and returning to France, in 1770, obtained an engagement at Rouen. Here she acted with so much success that the fame of her talent reached Paris; and soon she received an official order to visit the capital, and make her *début* at the Comédie Française.

Raucourt followed his adopted child to the capital; hoping, it may be, that those who appreciated her would also form a good opinion of him.

Arriving in Paris, the young girl was not called upon to appear at once. She was placed for a

time under an experienced actor; and it was not until September 22d, 1772, that she made her *début*, the part assigned to her being that of Dido. There is scarcely another instance of such a success as this young girl of scarcely seventeen at once obtained. She conquered her audience from the moment of her entry upon the stage, and the applause went on increasing from act to act until at last the triumph of the *débutante* passed all limits.

"She will be the immortal glory of the French theatre," wrote Grimm, immediately afterwards. "She effaces all that had previously been seen on the stage," said another critic. According to Bachaumont, it was "impossible to describe the sensation she caused, nothing within the memory of living man having been seen like it. She is only sixteen and a-half," he continues. "She is a study for a painter. She has the most beautiful, the most noble, the most dramatic face; her voice is charming, her intelligence prodigious. She did not make one mistake in the whole of her very difficult part; not the slightest false intonation, not one inappropriate gesture, not one

slip of any kind. She delighted everyone. She is a prodigy well calculated to make even her most accomplished rivals die of spite."

According to another account, the first impression made by the young actress was so great that bravos burst forth before she had pronounced one word. She had no sooner begun her part than the audience were carried away with "delirious admiration" and "wild transports." From act to act this rage, this fury, this frenzy went on increasing. "The pit was struck as if by madness. People laughed, wept, applauded, embraced one another, so that one might well have believed that, after the performance, all the spectators would, as a matter of course, be taken to the nearest asylum." Mdlle. Raucourt had risen that morning poor and unknown. She went to bed that night rich and celebrated.

The second representation was, if possible, more brilliant than the first, and such was the eagerness to see the new actress that the public flocked into the orchestra and even invaded the stage. "Paris," said one writer, "would have been less profoundly moved had it suddenly been

informed that the fleets of England had all been destroyed."

The only questions asked by people meeting one another in the street were, "Have you seen Mdlle. Raucourt?" All the approaches to the Comédie Française were blocked from the first thing in the morning, so that the actors could not get in to take part in the rehearsals. Fights took place beneath the portico, and, in the words of Grimm, "servants who were sent to take tickets did so at the risk of their lives."

In the evening, as soon as the doors were opened, there was a rush as of soldiers taking a position by assault. In vain had the military guard been trebled. The vestibules were occupied by force, the newly constructed barriers broken down.

In the neighbouring streets auctions for the sale of tickets were established. The wondrous days of Law's Mississippi scheme seemed to have returned. Places in the pit, costing twenty-four sous at the box-office, were sold for ten and twelve francs, the prices of the other places rising in the same proportion.

The *débutante* was ordered to appear at the Court Theatre; and her success at Versailles, if less noisy, was substantially as great as it had been at Paris. "The King," says Bachaumont, "paid Mdlle. Raucourt (or de Raucourt, as he calls her) the compliment of remaining in his box throughout the performance of *Dido,* which was the more remarkable inasmuch as His Majesty does not care for the theatre, and in particular dislikes tragedy."

Louis XV. had been as much dazzled as any of his subjects. At the end of the performance he introduced the admirable actress to the Dauphiness, saying: "I present to you Queen Dido," and he afterwards gave her fifty louis in token of his satisfaction. Mme. du Barry was equally delighted with her, and, wishing to make her a present, asked whether she should offer her three dresses for private or one for stage use. The actress replied that she should prefer the stage dress, as the public would profit by it as well as herself.

The King had given orders that Mdlle. Raucourt should be received as a member of the Comédie

Française without being required to give any further proofs of her talent. Meanwhile her wonderful success, her mighty triumphs, filled her rivals with despair. They did not, indeed, "die of spite," but they combined against the common enemy, against the newcomer who had caused the charming Adrienne Lecouvreur and the sublime Clairon to be forgotten. The two leaders of the opposition now organised against Mdlle. Raucourt were Mdlle. de Saint-Val and Mme. Vestris, who, from enemies, became friends for the occasion. They organised a cabal. They filled the pit with hired agents, well paid to disturb the performance and at the proper moment hiss. What, however, could a cabal do against a public animated by genuine enthusiasm—an enthusiasm which became greater and greater in proportion as, from interested motives, it was opposed. Everything would have been permitted to Raucourt now that she was known to be the object of such shameful attacks. One night when, in *Mithridates,* she had forgotten some of her words, "It is all through that Mdlle. de Saint-Val," was the general comment. At another time, when a cat had happened

to cross the stage, "Sent on by Mme. Vestris," said someone in the pit; an explanation which was received with loud applause.

Mdlle. Raucourt paid very little attention to an organised hostility which, in presence of universal admiration, had less than no effect.

Amongst her innumerable admirers, more than one lover now declared himself. Of these, among the earlier ones, the most notorious was Beaujon, the Court banker, who, as Bachaumont put it, "though he had never been a man of letters, wished to preside at the young girl's studies,"—and to make her rehearse at his house. "People say," continued the chronicler, "that he is occupied more with her person than with her talent. Many wish that she would bring down the fat of this puffed-up financier, who, after having narrowly escaped hanging in 1748, is now the Plutus of the day."

Bachaumont's pious wish was not to be gratified. Mdlle. Raucourt was at this period of her career a model of propriety.

CHAPTER II.

THE virtue, indeed, of Mdlle. Raucourt was so celebrated that for a time it was as much spoken of as her talent. The memoirs and chronicles all mention it. The letters of the eminent correspondents in the service of the Russian and of various German Courts are full of it.

In lieu of a vigilant mother, the favourite actress was guarded by a terrible father, ready to defend her and to attack her admirers at any moment. Raucourt followed his adopted child like her shadow. He was present at the rehearsals and at the performances. He attended her when she walked out; and if anyone invited her to an entertainment, it was necessary to ask him also. People compared him to a jealous lover keeping guard over a flighty mistress.

When she went out in a sedan chair, he walked at the side with a pistol in his hand, and he had sworn a hundred times with the most solemn oaths that he would kill without mercy the first who dared ——

"Yes," objected someone; "the first, my dear M. Raucourt. But the second—and the third?"

The sword he habitually wore, the pistol he occasionally carried, were, however, not wanted. Mdlle. Raucourt was virtuous, or rather she was virtue incarnate. In vain was her heart besieged like the box-office of the theatre the nights of her performance. The most brilliant propositions, the most attractive offers had no effect upon her. One man placed fifty thousand francs at her feet, another one hundred thousand; a third went higher still in this species of auction, but to no purpose.

All this became known to the public, and no one could sufficiently praise Mdlle. Raucourt's surprising, unprecedented reserve. She reaped the benefit of her reputation when at night the admiring public applauded her to the echo. "Joan of Arc at the Comédie Française" she was called; "the Wise Virgin in the midst of the foolish ones;' and "Diana with the features of Venus."

"It is said," wrote Grimm, "that this charming creature, so imposing on the stage, is perfectly simple when she has left the theatre; that

she has all the candour, all the innocence of her age; that all the time she can spare from the study of her art is spent in children's games. Endless dissertations were written with the view of discovering metaphysically by what power a girl so young, and so innocent, could represent with so much passion on the stage the transports and the fury of love.

Soon the virtue of Mdlle. Raucourt became the great affair of the day. It was inquired after every morning; and Bachaumont, for one, is found replying: "The virtue of the new actress keeps up;" and again, "The virtue of the new actress resists the most numerous assaults." "Has she yielded?" "Will she ever yield?" was asked; and heavy bets were laid on the subject.

Meanwhile, she was encouraged to persevere in her novel and surprising course. People took the same interest in her as in some marvellous phenomenon. The ladies of the Court combined together in order to preach to her, one after the other, the duties of morality, and the delights of a chaste and virtuous life. They assured her, as if from experience, that happiness did not

consist in having lovers. At the same time, handsome presents were made to her, as if to reward her for her determined course. Princesses and duchesses vied with one another in enriching her wardrobe; and Mme. du Barry promised her a dowry for the day of her marriage.

The young woman's virtue was becoming actually a source of profit to her. One day an old gentlemen entered her dressing-room, and said to her: "My age, mademoiselle, will reassure you as to the purity of my intentions. I admire your talent, I admire your virtue, and your modesty still more. Allow me to offer you a slight token of my admiration." He approached her dressing-table, and laid upon it two rouleaus of one hundred gold louis each. Mdlle. Raucourt could not refuse a gift made in such terms, and the old gentleman went away without making himself known.

Another time a gentleman less old offered her twelve thousand francs a year if she would remain as she was, and twice as much if, deciding not to do so, she gave him the preference.

She received offers, moreover, from the Duke

de Bourbon, a prince of the blood. She would not listen to him; upon which her rival Mdlle. Saint-Val exclaimed: "She is not a woman; she is a monster!"

Voltaire, who respected nothing, was the first to cast ink on her immaculate reputation. It has been suggested that so much fuss about the virtue of an actress irritated him. He may also have believed that what he said was true. He, in any case, wrote to Marshal de Richelieu that in Spain Mdlle. Raucourt had been much too intimate with a certain gentleman from Geneva. Richelieu was dining at a house where one of the guests was Mdlle. Raucourt when Voltaire's letter reached him. As everyone was burning with anxiety to know what the patriarch of Ferney had to say to him, he opened the letter, and, without reading it, passed it to one of his guests, the Marquis de Ximenes, asking him to let the whole assembly know what was in it.

The Marquis de Ximenes began, and, reading hurriedly, continued to read. When he arrived at the fatal passage in which Voltaire spoke of

Mdlle. Raucourt, the poor young actress fainted, while her father, rising from the table, and drawing his sword, declared that he would have the calumniator's life.

The day afterwards the story was known all over Paris; and the city was divided into those who believed it and those who did not. One of Voltaire's numerous correspondents told him what had happened, describing to him the imprudence of Richelieu, the awkwardness of Ximenes, the swooning of the lady, and the indignation of the public. He did not hesitate to make amends. He did his best to console the actress with the brilliancy of his wit, the fascination of his style, sending her letter after letter, and stanza after stanza. "I am the aged Æson, and you the enchantress Medea," he wrote to her one day; and the day afterwards, "I have scarcely left to me eyes to see you, a soul to admire you, a hand to write to you."

The verses with which he sought to pacify the wounded lady were clever, of course; though, for Voltaire, commonplace. Here are two of the stanzas:—

"Raucourt, tes talents enchanteurs
Chaque jour te font des conquêtes.
Tu fais soupirer tous les cœurs,
Tu fais tourner toutes les têtes.

"L'art d'attendrir et de charmer
A paré ta brilliante aurore ;
Mais ton cœur est fait pour aimer,
Et ce cœur ne dit rien encore."

Voltaire's reproach to the effect that the actress's heart was "made to love," in spite of which it had not yet made any sign, was of evil augury. Or, perhaps, as before suggested, the story of the Genevese may have been true. Voltaire lived close to Geneva, and was more or less in a position to know.

However that may have been, the report was spread one day through stupefied Paris that the phenomenal virtue of Mdlle. Raucourt had at last given way, and in presence of an attack from no less formidable an assailant than the King himself. A Parisian belonging to the Court wrote at this time from Compiègne: "Mdlle. Raucourt has just given a performance for the benefit of His Majesty. No one expected it; nor is it likely to meet with the success of Dido.

However, she has this excuse for herself: What woman resists her sovereign?" According, however, to another authority, it was not Louis XV. but the Duke d'Aiguillon who was in question.

It appears, moreover, from a letter on the subject, that Mdlle. Raucourt owed at this time forty thousand francs, which the Marquis de Bièvre paid. Unedifying particulars are also given as to an annuity which he is said to have bought for her, the amount of the monthly allowance he made to her, and so on. What had become of Raucourt, with his fierce demeanour, his pistol and his sword, is not stated. It is difficult, however, to believe that he was not a consenting party; and thus the whole legend of his watchfulness, and of his adopted daughter's virtue, becomes worthless.

The actress now lived a life of the utmost luxury and extravagance; and soon another marquis appeared on the scene. She got this one, de Villette, into many scrapes, for she had completely lost her head. She did her best to make him fight a duel with the architect Bélanger about some offence she had received at

the hands of Sophie Arnould, for whose conduct at the time Bélanger was more or less responsible. M. de Villette, however, was not of a fighting disposition; which did not prevent his being ultimately brought to grief through a money difficulty in which the now reckless Mdlle. Raucourt had involved him

M. de Villette, in his distress, appealed to the public, and wrote several letters on the subject of the ill-treatment he had received at Mdlle. Raucourt's hands. All the laughter, however, was on the side of the actress. Then the Marquis addressed to her a copy of verses beginning,—

"Oui, je fus un sot de t'aimer,
Oui je fus un sot de t'écrire."

"Très sot!" exclaimed a lively commentator.

Mdlle. Raucourt's only reply was to send the Marquis a broomstick, with the famous couplet attached to it, slightly altered, that Voltaire wrote for a statue of Love,—

"Très cher Marquis, voici ton maître;
Il l'est, le fut ou le doit être."

The prestige of Mdlle. Raucourt had disappeared. Her reign had been but a short one. With her reputation for virtue her renown as a tragic actress had vanished: a proof that the public, even the French public, is more mindful than is generally supposed of an actress's private character. It was now said that she had too long a waist, and that her skinny arms left much to be desired. Even the beauty of her countenance was denied, upon the ground that it was too masculine. People asked one another by what blindness they could have admired a hoarse voice, exaggerated gestures, and a generally vicious style. It was as though a bandage had fallen from the eyes of the public. One day the actress was adored, the next almost execrated.

Her extraordinary reputation for virtue had wounded many of her colleagues, and now that this reputation had passed away, the public was indignant to think how for a time it had been taken in. Mme. Vestris and Mdlle. de Saint-Val had been obliged to keep quiet as long as their rival enjoyed such immense popularity. Now, however, they found themselves free to give full

vent to their animosity; and by this newly acquired liberty they fully profited. The idol had been overturned, and anyone who chose might insult it. Contrary to the custom of the French public, contrary also to the spirit of fairplay, the audiences attacked in Dido and in Cleopatra the private life of Mdlle. Raucourt, the representative of those heroines. In her early days she had been known by the distinctive and somewhat ridiculous title of the "chaste tragedian." She now seemed to have resolved to take revenge for the strict rules she had formerly imposed upon herself; always supposing that the ferocious attitude of the protecting Raucourt had nothing to do with her supposed innocence which may have been only the result of fear. From fault to fault she fell at last into the most lamentable excesses, which were duly chronicled by the purveyors of gossip to the Parisians and to the different crowned heads who could afford the luxury of a private Paris correspondent.

"She had astonished Paris," wrote Grimm, "by the prodigy of her virtue; she now surprised it by the monstrosity of her vice. She at last

scandalised those who were least susceptible to scandal."

"The most injurious letters were circulated about her," says another writer; "the most abominable things were attributed to her." "Mdlle. Raucourt now shows herself in her true colours," we read elsewhere, "no mystery, no secrecy is possible; everything is unveiled."

Nothing that she does escapes notice. A new planet is less attentively, less minutely examined from the summit of the observatory than is this theatrical star by the whole theatrical world. She at last, and no wonder, became disgusted with her own profession, played carelessly, and ceased to study.

There was a little reaction in her favour, however, when she appeared as the Statue (who has since received the name of Galatea—whence derived it would be difficult to say) in the *Pygmalion* of Jean Jacques Rousseau. In this piece she made quite a sensation.

"Mdlle. Raucourt," writes Bachaumont, "represented the Statue, and was really admirable. Many thought it was the finest part she had

ever played." According to La Harpe, it was "impossible to imagine a more seductive apparition than that of this actress when first discovered on her pedestal, at the moment when the veil is drawn aside which had hitherto covered her. Her head was that of Venus, her leg, partially exposed, that of Diana."

This, however, was but a truce, a last respite, by which she did not manage to profit. Her humiliations were soon to begin again. A party had been formed against her in the theatre, and she was now systematically entrusted with parts unsuited to her means, besides being forced at times to appear suddenly in characters which she had not had time to study.

One night, when *Britannicus* was to be played, Mdlle. Duménil, who was to have represented Agrippine, happening to fall ill, Mdlle. Raucourt was compelled to replace her. A formal request was made for the indulgence of the public, but she was received in such a manner that she fainted on the stage. The curtain was lowered, and she was carried away in an unconscious state.

She had now difficulties of every kind to con-

tend with, apart from the intrigues of her rivals and the insults of the pit—at that time in France, as in England, the recognised territory of critics professional and unprofessional. She had to reckon with her creditors, who were both numerous and relentless. In less than three years, while spending immense sums, she had also managed to contract debts to the amount of some three hundred thousand francs. At this time she is reported to have kept twelve horses, several carriages, three or four separate residences, all furnished in the most luxurious manner, fifteen servants, and a wardrobe of the most sumptuous kind, comprising male as well as female attire. The conversation having one day turned in her presence upon the follies of young men in connection with women, she calmly observed: "I am not surprised that so many men should ruin themselves for women; it is the most expensive of all tastes."

At last, pursued by her creditors, and hooted by the public, she was obliged to seek safety in flight.

"The collapse of Mdlle. Raucourt," writes Grimm, "has suddenly interrupted the performance of

Monsieur de la Fèvre's *Zuma*. Sudden as was her disappearance, it took no one by surprise." "It was reserved for our time," added Bachaumont, "to see the most brilliant actress of the Comédie Française so entirely without means as to be reduced to bankruptcy."

What had become of her? was asked on all sides. This question was put very earnestly indeed by the creditors, who rushed after the fugitive in every direction. Meanwhile, disguised as a dragoon, Mdlle. Raucourt was concealing herself in the neighbourhood of Paris. A farmer, who mistook her for a young officer in trouble about an unfortunate duel, had given her hospitality.

After passing more than six weeks in this retreat, she determined to risk a return to Paris, where she succeeded in reaching the Temple, at that time the recognised asylum of debtors unable to pay. Here she remained several months, while some of her friends entered into negotiations with the creditors. Time was granted to her, and she was able to reappear at the Comédie Française, where one of her fiercest rivals, Mdlle. de Saint-

Val, in spite of all her efforts, had not been able to replace her. During the whole winter she was in a state of perpetual anxiety.

She looked everywhere for some protector, but no one would have anything to say to her. At last she succeeded in exciting the interest of the Queen; when, in the month of March 1777, as she was getting into her carriage in order to drive to Longchamps, she was arrested and taken to For l'Evêque. Fortunately for her she did not remain long in prison, or she would have had detainers without number lodged against her. A benevolent hand came to her assistance, and she left the prison, without giving anything whatever except promises. Her liberator was the Prince de Ligne, who had come forward at the instance of Mdlle. Souck, one of Mdlle. Raucourt's most intimate friends. The Prince spoke of paying everything that was due, and as hopes were also entertained in connection with the Queen, the creditors once more became pacified, and once more granted time. A brilliant success might still save the distressed actress. She endeavoured to obtain a new engagement at the Comédie

Française. But the company, accustomed to tolerate faults of another kind, declined to receive an actress who had become bankrupt. Then, in her despair, she joined an independent company, from which she obtained ten thousand francs.

The creditors had not lost hope, and they began their attacks anew. Once more Mdlle. Raucourt took to flight, and this time left the country; her devoted friend, Mdlle. Souck, accompanying her. The two wanderers visited Germany, Poland and Russia. But the doings of the actress in these northern parts have not been chronicled. It is said, however, that in Holland she attached herself to a rich Russian nobleman, and in a very short time spent a very large fortune. It was probably in company with this gentleman that she visited Russia. It was reported, moreover, that she had some not very creditable adventures at Hamburg, where Mdlle. Souck and herself, charged with swindling, came into collision with the police. This, however, may have been only malicious gossip. The story rests on no authentic basis.

CHAPTER III.

In less than a year Mdlle. Raucourt was entirely forgotten, and her two rivals, Mdlle. de Saint-Val and Mme. Vestris had fallen out between themselves. Mme. Vestris got the worst of the struggle, when the sublime idea occurred to her of bringing back to Paris the exiled actress, who, she knew, would totally eclipse the actress by whom she herself had been overshadowed. The overtures made to Mdlle. Raucourt by her former enemy, who now tendered the hand of friendship with a view to hostile action against another, were such that it was impossible not to accept them. Mme. Vestris undertook that there should be no more intrigues against the "illustrious tragedian," and assured her, moreover, of the most powerful support, including that of all Mme. Vestris' own personal friends. These were sufficiently numerous.

Returning to Paris, Mdlle. Raucourt, without looking forward to the popularity which she had enjoyed in former days, expected at least to be

received with ordinary consideration. No one, however, would have anything to say to her; neither the public nor those private acquaintances who, she had felt sure, must have forgotten the scandals of a twelvemonth before. No one desired even so much as a visit from this "most compromising of women."

Without resources, without friends, she knew not where to go, when she received hospitality from Sophie Arnould. "Melpomene received by Armida" was one of the comments provoked by Sophie's courageous act. It cost her, however, her popularity. Her motives were misinterpreted. She was hissed at the Opera, and reviled wherever her name was mentioned.

In no way disconcerted, Sophie did not content herself with giving to the persecuted actress mere hospitality. She appealed to all her friends on behalf of a woman who was now not so much not appreciated as neglected and despised. Prince d'Hénin, who at this time was specially interested in Sophie, took up the cause of her unfortunate friend and became one of Mdlle. Raucourt's warmest partisans. For her sake he intrigued,

put forth all his influence, and appealed to everyone on whom he had the slightest claim.

The company of the Comédie Française did not prove, by any means, so easy to deal with as Mme. Vestris had supposed. They had struck Mdlle. Raucourt off their list, and intended to maintain her exclusion. They declared that the statutes of the society were opposed to her return, and maintained, moreover, that Mdlle. Raucourt's licentious conduct would disgrace their theatre. On the other hand, the Duke de Duras, one of the high officials, was determined that Mdlle. Raucourt should return; and as she was not only his *protégée,* but also the *protégée* of the Queen, he had no trouble in procuring from the King an order for her restoration to all the privileges which she had formerly enjoyed.

For her new *début* Mdlle. Raucourt chose her famous part of Dido: the part in which, several years before, she had gained such unheard-of triumphs. As in the days of her first appearance, the approaches to the theatre were besieged long before the doors were opened. But no sooner was the house full than, although the curtain had

not yet gone up, hissing and hooting were heard from all parts of the theatre. The pit, above all, was in a stormy condition.

The curtain rose, Dido appeared, and the storm burst forth. The pit, indignant at the idea of an actress being imposed upon them, rose as one man, and the tumult now went beyond all bounds. Insults, nicknames, the most injurious epithets were hurled at the unhappy Raucourt. "It was impossible," says one of the criticisms, "to hear a single word of her part. The other actors were allowed to speak, but as soon as her turn came the clamour began again. It is suspected that the partisans of Mdlle. de Saint-Val are no strangers to this fermentation."

In presence of such manifestations of hatred, Mdlle. Raucourt thought of retiring. Mme. Vestris, whose part she was now playing, and some devoted friends, with Sophie Arnould at their head, encouraged her to remain. The Duke de Duras declared, moreover, that he would triumph over public opinion, as he had already done over the company of actors; but he had overrated his power. Duke as he was, Court official, gentleman

of the chamber, and, above all, general superintendent of the Comédie Française, he could not prevail over the determination of the public. In vain did the autocrat of the theatre double and treble the guard. A whole regiment would have been unable to secure applause for Mdlle. Raucourt.

Mdlle. Raucourt determined to try a new part, and to her misfortune hit upon that of Phèdre, which was full of lines that could with ease be turned against her. When, for instance, the actress had to exclaim,—

"De l'austère pudeur les bornes sont passées !"

"Yes, indeed!" cried the pit. In another place the public seized upon the line,—

"Et moi, triste rébut de la Nature entière,"

— a burst of ironical applause showing that Mdlle. Raucourt was herself looked upon as a "triste rébut." "Neither her beauty nor her sex," wrote Grimm, "protected her any longer. Never before did the public forget to such a point its own dignity." The Duke de Duras was in

some measure responsible for these scenes, since, by his determination to overcome the public, he exasperated it all the more. His object was to please, in the first place, Mme. Vestris, who herself desired that everything should be done to promote Mdlle. Raucourt's success. Accordingly, the Duke not only trebled the guard, but filled the pit with policemen. If anyone hissed, he was seized and taken to prison. But when one malcontent was removed from the theatre, ten others took his place; and to put an end to the hissing it would have been necessary to arrest not only the whole audience but also the whole of the public waiting outside, with the view, as soon as an opportunity presented itself, of forcing their way in.

"The Comédie Française," said someone, "has become a regular mousetrap."

Mdlle. Raucourt, beaten on all points, resolved no longer to brave the storm. On the 15th of September 1779 she inserted in the *Journal de Paris* a letter, ironical in its humility, setting forth that, far from aspiring to the parts of Mdlle. de Saint-Val, she had only come back to Paris in

order to be a general under-study to the leading artists.

The creditors now showed themselves more lively than ever. Urged on by the actress's remorseless rivals, they left her not a moment's peace. She was about once more to expatriate herself, in order to avoid imprisonment, when a royal declaration was put forth, of which the chief purport was, "to render free from all seizure or stoppage the wages and appointments of the comedians and other persons attached to the playhouses, up to the amount of two-thirds, apart from the necessary expenditure for board and lodging."

People did not fail to say that this declaration had been made expressly for the benefit of Mdlle. Raucourt; and, apparently, such was the case. "Two or three times already," wrote a chronicler, "the Queen had shown herself inclined to pay the debts of her favourite tragedian, but the enormity of the sum, at least three hundred thousand francs, always prevented Her Majesty. It was found more economical to settle the matter by means of an edict, which cost nothing."

This mark of the royal favour, while saving Mdlle. Raucourt from prison, exposed her to a new storm of invectives. She was insulted at all hands. "She was destined," said a writer, "to be all her life the fable and the scandal of Paris." Out of the innumerable pamphlets directed against her, one of the most savage, was entitled *Vision of the Prophet Daniel.* The author occupied himself exclusively with two personages, Mdlle. Raucourt and Prince d'Hénin.

"And everyone cried out, 'Make way for the Prince des Nains!'

"And I looked, expecting to behold at the head of a troop of pigmies a miserable abortion.

"And I saw a tall, thin man, with a foolish eye, and a silly smile, affecting an air of importance; and what was my surprise when I saw, through his transparent body, that, in place of blood, a black and poisonous mud circulated in his veins.

"And his corrupt heart was falling into rottenness.

"And he made his way through the crowd with a woman resting upon his arm, whom I took for

a man, from her audacious demeanour, her loud voice, and her gigantic stature.

"She cast around her lascivious glances, and a voice cried out: 'Behold her; the woman who has gone beyond all the abominations that ever disgraced a nation of the earth.'

"And she now wishes to renew her scenes of extravagance and debauchery."

The author of these prophetic denunciations, while accusing Mdlle. Raucourt of everything shameful that he could think of, forgot to charge her with an act of treachery which she was on the point of committing. "She now rendered herself guilty of the blackest act," says a writer, "that could be committed." Less than a year after her return, one fine evening in the month of January 1780, she secretly left the hospitable abode of Sophie Arnould, taking with her Prince d'Hénin. The story was soon known all over Paris, and was thought highly amusing. Mdlle. Raucourt was considered despicable, but Sophie Arnould was scarcely pitied. "Mdlle. Arnould is justly punished," wrote one commen-

tator. "She deserved this piece of treachery for having welcomed a woman who is the opprobrium of her sex." Naturally the fugitive and her prince did not know where to find a hiding place. They were afraid of Sophie, whom they knew to be vindictive. Would she not suddenly disturb them at the moment, perhaps, when she was least expected? Prince d'Artois is said to have sold them a house. He, in fact, let it to them, and, moreover, exacted payment.

Mdlle. Raucourt had still more than fifty creditors, who were always "howling at her petticoats." As if entangled in a net, she had to struggle incessantly against her persecutors. She defended herself as best she could with stratagems and with falsehood. Meanwhile, she had not the slightest idea of order or economy. "She would think herself dishonoured if she renounced her prodigal life. All the money she can manage to get together she employs only with a view to fresh loans."

In the *Mémoires Secrets*, under date September 16th, 1781, the following passage appears:—"Queen Melpomene is more than ever ruined by debt.

Prince d'Hénin, to save her from the pursuits of her creditors, has become the ostensible possessor of all her furniture and other property. But he is summoned to declare upon oath, before the Civil Lieutenant, whether his pretended ownership is not simulated."

In the midst of her distress, Mdlle. Raucourt consoled herself by writing a play.

She composed for the Théâtre Français a drama entitled *Henriette;* the subject of which was borrowed from a ballet that she had seen at Warsaw in the course of her northern pilgrimage.

Henriette, or the piece from which it was taken, seems to have possessed some political colour; and, produced only a very few years after the partition of Poland by Russia, Prussia and Austria, it contained attacks on the King of Prussia, or at least hostile allusions to Prussia's Sovereign, at that time Frederick the Great. Warsaw was still the capital of that portion of Poland which remained nominally independent; for the partitioning powers had hitherto seized only the outlying portions of the condemned State. But the Russians were all-powerful at

Warsaw, and it must have been with their consent or connivance that a satire directed at the Prussian King was made on the public stage. Strangely enough, *Henriette*, tolerated at Warsaw, was objected to at Paris, where the Prussian Ambassador protested against its representation, or rather requested that "the passages likely to wound the King, his master, should be suppressed." After many communications, and much correspondence, it was decided that the objectionable passages should be allowed to remain, on the ground that the author's satire against the King of Prussia seemed more remarkable for its intention than for its effect. Prince d'Hénin had done his utmost to rescue Mdlle. Raucourt's piece from the claws of the censor. The following letter, addressed by him to M. Suard, the censor of the moment, is sufficiently interesting:—

"M. le Noir (Lieutenant of Police) has just informed the director of the Comédie Française that certain excisions must be submitted to, dictated, it is said, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and by the Prussian Envoy, in the play of *Henriette*.

"The manuscript is now in your hands, and I beg you to send it back to-morrow, at nine o'clock in the morning, to its author, however much mutilated it may be. He [*il*] is resolved to run the risk of the performance, well assured that friends and the general public will make amends for the vexations which she [*elle*] has not ceased to suffer on the part of the police."

On the 1st of March 1782 *Henriette* was produced; and never, according to Grimm, did any masterpiece of Corneille or Racine draw such an audience. In spite of cabals, the play was successful. Grimm describes the subject as monstrous, but the public was not of his opinion.

"The first act," says Bachaumont, "was thought cold, but the second excited long, frequent and sincere applause. The third act was also applauded, though with less enthusiasm." The bravos were, according to some accounts, addressed less to the drama than to the actress who had written it. Everyone admitted that she was charming in the uniform of a Prussian soldier.

The piece was not, of course, universally praised.

"Everything is Germanic in this play," said one newspaper; "subject, manners, costume and language."

Mdlle. Raucourt's sworn foes, unable to get *Henriette* hissed, now denied that she had written it. It was really, they said, the work of M. Durosoy, who had brought it out under Mdlle. Raucourt's name. The following epigram on the subject is said to have been the work of Chamfort and two of his friends; though it is not so prodigiously witty but that one writer might have produced it:—

"Au théâtre on vient d'annoncer
Une pièce nouvelle,
Qui doit beaucoup intéresser;
C'est d'un auteur femelle.
C'est un histrion
Las du cotillon
Qui prend un nouvel être;
Son cœur est usé
Son goût est blasé,
Son esprit vient de naître."

Mdlle. Raucourt had now discovered a new line, to which she had resolved, as much as possible, to keep. Two years after the production of

Henriette, she obtained a genuine success as a captain of dragoons in a piece by Rochon de Chabannes called *Le Jaloux*. The ease with which she wore the uniform was particularly admired. We have already seen that for six weeks she had, while lying in concealment, worn nothing else.

"What an actor that Raucourt is!" exclaimed her rival, Mdlle. de Saint-Val, "and what a pity she persists in wishing to play women's parts!"

CHAPTER IV.

In 1786 Mdlle. Raucourt, as an actress, was once more at the height of her success. The writers of the period seem, oddly enough, to have forgotten the triumphs of her earliest days. "Rising from her position of mediocrity," writes Bachaumont, "Mdlle. Raucourt has now taken her rank among our great actresses."

"The tragic queen," writes at the same time

a rather pompous gentleman, "is resuming at the Comédie Française the sceptre due to genius."

Soon afterwards she appeared in the part of Medea, and acted with so much distinction, energy and truth, that she was applauded to the echo. She was superb in her costume. She had now fully regained all the ground she had previously lost; and from this time, until her retirement from the stage, her career was one unbroken series of triumphs.

She had changed her manner, but in no degree her morals; and she was as extravagant as ever in her general mode of life. Now, however, the Revolution was at hand, and the writers of the time have more important things to speak of than the fortunes and misfortunes of Mdlle. Raucourt. The Revolution was fatal to her; indeed she had a narrow escape of the guillotine. Arrested in 1793, with most of the principal actors and actresses, she was as a first step imprisoned at Sainte-Pélagie. But already she was marked down for the scaffold. The Queen had protected her, she had received numerous benefits from the royal family, and she was suspected of gratitude for so

many favours. Fleury sets forth in his *Memoirs* that, on the margin of the depositions in the case of Mdlle. Raucourt, Collot D'Herbois had written with his own hand, in red, an enormous "G." This was a death sentence without appeal. "G" stood for guillotine.

Like so many of her colleagues at the Comédie Française, including Mdlle. Contat and her sister Mdlle. Lange, Dazincourt, Saint-Prix, Vanhove, Fleury himself, and very many more, Mdlle Raucourt owed her life to the courage and ingenuity of an obscure clerk in the employment of the Committee of Public Safety, Jean de Labussière by name.

Having regained her liberty, Mdlle. Raucourt tried to form a company for herself, and, succeeding, took a theatre, which was soon, however, closed by order of the Government, some pretended allusion to its severity having been discovered in one of the pieces represented.

In the midst of so many grave faults, Mdlle. Raucourt seems to have retained her feeling of gratitude towards the royal family which had so often befriended her. Having passed beneath the

shadow of the guillotine, she had enough prudence for a time to conceal her sympathies; and when the great danger had passed, she made no secret of her antagonism towards the Directory, and of her desire for the restoration of the monarchy. She became a leading figure in what was called *Le petit Coblentz,* where the friends and partisans of the legitimate sovereign worked together, as the German sovereigns had done before invading France. She belonged to that faction of malcontents who longed for the restoration of the royal power, and imagined that by force of jests, sarcasms and epigrams, they could upset the Republic. Mdlle. Raucourt's ordinary costume is said to have been a constant protest against the existing order of things. She wore on her spenser eighteen buttons, in allusion to Louis XVIII.; and her fan was one of those weeping-willow fans, the folds of which formed the face of Marie-Antoinette. Fleury speaks, moreover, of a certain shawl worn by Mdlle. Raucourt, of which the pattern, once explained, traced to the eyes of the initiated the portraits of Louis, the Queen and the Dauphin. One day he accompanied

her to a fortune-teller, who had been expected to predict the restoration of the monarchy, but who foretold instead the revival of the Comédie Française. The woman had read the cards aright, for in 1799 an order from the First Consul reassembled, in a new association, the remains of the company dispersed at the time of the Revolution.

Although she complained of the Republic, Mdlle. Raucourt had contrived to make her fortune through the good offices of political speculators dealing, under the new-formed Government, in assignats, Government contracts and confiscated estates. She was now no longer in need, but, on the contrary, possessed property which brought her in a considerable income. As luxurious as ever, the enriched actress gave a series of splendid *fêtes*, at which, without being invited, the general public, forcing its way in, was at least tolerated. Her illuminated gardens were, of course, compared to "fairyland," and here it was that all who thought fit to enter were allowed to wander at will.

In the midst of her magnificence, Mdlle. Raucourt heard one morning of an accident which

could not but cause her annoyance, if not genuine pain. Her father, the Saucerotte of other days, tired of starving, had either fallen, or, as malicious people asserted, had thrown himself from a fifth-floor window into the street below.

"Why could he not wait?" the afflicted daughter is said to have exclaimed. "I was preparing an apartment for him."

After the establishment of the Empire, Mdlle. Raucourt was engaged by Napoleon to form companies of actors, who were to go through Italy, in order to extend French influence.

In 1806 Mdlle. Raucourt opened the French Theatre of Milan with *Iphigénie en Aulide,* in which she took the part of Clytemenestre. Her success is said to have been immense. We now find the actress making money in the character of manageress, apart from her own personal salary. She travelled through Italy, giving a performance here, a performance there, and reserving in all of them the principal part for herself. From time to time, moreover, she returned to Paris, where she never failed to appear at the Théâtre Français in her favourite parts. But born in

1753, she had now been some forty years on the stage, and began to show unmistakable signs of failing powers. A few years later, in 1814, her friends persuaded her to retire, and she appeared, for the last time, as Catherine de Medicis, in Raynouard's *Etats de Blois.*

She did not long survive her retirement. On 15th January 1815, after a short illness, she died, thanking God for having allowed her to salute the return of the legitimate dynasty.

Mdlle. Raucourt, however, had a better opinion of the Restoration than had the Restoration of Mdlle. Raucourt. The clergy of the restored dynasty had shown itself in many ways intolerant; and Mdlle. Raucourt's funeral was the occasion of a riot, which threatened at one time to become formidable. The Curé of Saint-Roch would not allow the body to be brought into his church, though he is said to have received again and again gifts from the actress, either for his church, or for the poor of his parish. Only a few days beforehand, on the first day of the year, she had sent him an offering of five hundred francs.

Representations were made to the clergy, but without avail. At last an indignant crowd broke open the doors of the church. Meanwhile, Louis XVIII., informed of what was taking place, had ordered one of his chaplains to go to Saint-Roch, and there, replacing the Curé, perform the funeral service. The soldiers had been called out, but they were judiciously withdrawn. They were kept, at least, in an attitude only of observation, while a crowd that was constantly increasing followed the corpse of Mdlle. Raucourt to the cemetery of Père-la-Chaise. While the public excitement was at its height, one of the deceased actress's friends remarked: "If poor Raucourt could only see from her heavenly home what a scandal she is causing, how delighted she would be!"

MADAME DE SAINT-HUBERTY.

CHAPTER I.

At a time when so much importance is attached by actors and even actresses to the unimportant question of the actor's social position, it may be interesting to mention that Mme. de Saint-Huberty was at once the first actress and the first singer who was accepted in France both by women and men as a lady. The society of Sophie Arnould was eagerly sought by writers and philosophers of the greatest distinction, and by noblemen of the highest birth; but though Bélanger (whose friendship for her, like that of Lauragais, endured to the end) introduced her after his marriage to

his wife, she was, as a rule, excluded from all female society but that of the stage.

Mme. de Saint-Huberty, before becoming Countess d'Antraigues, began, like nearly all actresses of her time, by contracting with the man of her choice an informal union. But she was faithful to Count d'Antraigues, who, faithful also to her, at last married her.

Mme. de Saint-Huberty, to give her the name by which she is known in the history of the stage, had two husbands, both of them adventurers; but the first, who bore and had in fact assumed the name of Saint-Huberty was a theatrical adventurer of low character, whereas her second, Count d'Antraigues, was a political and diplomatic adventurer of superior stamp. Anne-Antoinette Clavel was born at Strasburg on the 15th of December 1756. She was the daughter of an old soldier, who, since his retirement from military service, had been chiefly occupied as manager of a French operatic troupe in the service of the Elector of Bavaria, with headquarters at Mannheim. Retiring from the Elector's service, he had directed theatrical companies in various places, from Stras-

burg to Toulouse. He was connected at the time of his daughter's birth with the theatre of Strasburg; and she was only a few years old when, recognising her exceptional talents, he began to occupy himself seriously with her musical education. She was still but a child when, singing to her own harpsichord accompaniment, she did so with so much taste that she excited the astonishment and admiration of all who heard her. The fame of her precocious talent soon got spread abroad, and engagements were offered to her by several provincial managers. But her father and mother knew too much of theatrical life, and had too great an affection for their daughter to allow her at so early an age to separate from them. Early in 1774 tempting proposals were made by the director of a theatre at Barcelona; but his offer, like so many others, was not accepted. At last the parents decided that their daughter should appear on the stage, but only at Strasburg, where they would be with her.

An interesting and unquestionably authentic account of Antoinette Clavel's early youth has been preserved in the *Causes Célèbres*, published at

Paris in 1783, the particular case in which this account appears being that of Antoinette Pariset, widow of Jean-Pierre Clavel, against Claude-Croisilles de Saint-Huberty, on the subject of his pretended marriage with Antoinette Clavel, the complainant's daughter. It appears, from the exposition of Mme. Clavel's case, that her daughter had been two or three years at the Strasburg theatre, when she met behind the scenes, living on intimate terms with the actors and actresses, a man who described himself as the director-general of the King of Prussia's "Menus Plaisirs," and in search of new talent for the French Theatre at Berlin. He made a great deal, according to Mme. Clavel, of the name he bore, and claimed to be related to the first families in Germany. He was still young, but had seen much of the world; a good talker, and capable, by his gilded speeches, of exciting the imagination of women. He made such magnificent promises to Antoinette, and held out to her the hope of such a brilliant career that, in the spring of 1775, the young girl resolved to quit her parents secretly, and follow M. Croisilles de Saint-Huberty to Berlin. She had no sooner

reached the Prussian capital than she discovered that the pretended director of the "Menus Plaisirs" of the King of Prussia was merely the stage manager of the company, and that he could only get partially carried out the conditions of the engagement which had induced Mdlle. Clavel to quit the paternal roof. Whether Antoinette was Saint-Huberty's mistress, or only, as she herself maintained, an ambitious young artist led away by the prospect of a most advantageous engagement, does not seem certain. In any case, Saint-Huberty was very anxious to make her his wife, which certainly gives colour to the young girl's statement.

The so-called Saint-Huberty was the son of a merchant at Metz, named simply Croisilles, and he had left home in order to gratify a passion he had formed for theatrical life. He declared to Mdlle. Clavel that the boundless possessions of the imaginary house of Saint-Huberty would one day be his; that he could secure her a career of the most dazzling character; that he loved her, and so on. The poor young girl was in a foreign country, without friends, and almost without the means of

living, and she ended by accepting the adventurer's hand. The marriage was celebrated September 10th, 1775, Saint-Huberty being described in the contract as "stage manager to the French Theatre of His Majesty the King of Prussia," and Mdlle. Clavel as "Jungfrau Maria-Antonia, native of Strasburg, actress."

The newly married girl was soon enlightened as to her husband's true character. "The third night of my marriage," she says, in her written evidence to support the demand of annulment, "was marked by the grossest language on the part of M. Croisilles, accompanied by a vigorous box on the ear because the counterpane was more on my side than on his." It appeared, moreover, from the young woman's formal deposition, that a few weeks later the husband took flight from Berlin, carrying off with him everything of value that his wife possessed.

In the midst of her difficulties, Antoinette suddenly received a letter from her husband, dated Warsaw, in which he informed her that he had just formed a company, which had already obtained the applause of the Polish Court, and that

she alone was wanting to give it completeness, and render it wholly worthy of performing before the northern crowns. The skilful director knew how to touch the heart of a vocalist; and partly, perhaps, because there was no other course open to her, but partly also because she liked the idea of rendering absolutely perfect a company which already approached perfection, Mme. de Saint-Huberty started for Warsaw. M. de Saint-Huberty's troupe had not yet given a single representation. The first performance, however, was highly successful.

Unwilling to let well alone, M. de Saint-Huberty determined to form his establishment on a more extended scale, and always in search of new talent, started for Hamburg. Thence, after making some engagements, he had the imprudence to go to Berlin, where his creditors arrested him, and threw him into prison.

CHAPTER II.

THE opera company which M. de Saint-Huberty had left at Warsaw had meanwhile to get on as well as it could without a director; that is to say, very badly indeed. As far, however, as Mme. de Saint-Huberty personally was concerned, she had nothing to complain of. She delighted everyone in *Zémire et Azor*, and other works of the period. The Polish nobles loaded her with presents, and the jewellery she thus received enabled her to raise a sum of twelve thousand francs, with which she liberated her worthless husband from his Prussian dungeon. Saint-Huberty now came to Warsaw. But the success of his company did not last, and soon the flighty director was obliged once more to decamp, leaving behind him a howling mob of creditors.

It was then that Mme. de Saint-Huberty, to protect herself from the demands made upon her as the debtor's wife, and in order to disengage herself from all responsibility in connection with

his liabilities, applied to the authorities of Warsaw for a formal separation in regard to property; when the request was granted, in an Act which M. Edmond de Goncourt, in his work *La Saint-Huberty, d'après sa Correspondance et ses Papiers de Famille*, reproduces:—

"Before the notaries and the public officers of the ancient town of Warsaw," runs the document, "appearing in person the noble Antoinette de Clavel, wife of the noble Philippe de Saint-Huberty, assisted for the present Act by the counsels of the noble George Godin, present, and called by her to this effect: The said Antoinette de Clavel, sound in mind and body, of her own accord has freely and expressly declared and declares by the present Act: That having learned that the nobleman Philippe de Saint-Huberty, her husband, had left Warsaw on account of a great number of debts by which he was crushed, and ignorant even of the place to which he had retired, and refusing in any manner to be bound by the debts of her husband, which he had contracted without her participation, she separates

herself from all the goods and property of the said husband, except, nevertheless, the goods which she has acquired and brought with her; and the said de Clavel declares, moreover, by a formal declaration, that she claims no interest whatever in her husband's property, and approves entirely of the present separation of her own interests in regard to property from those of her husband; in faith of which she has signed the present Act with her own hand.—ANTOINETTE DE CLAVEL, by marriage SAINT-HUBERTY. *Witness*, J. Godin."

According to his custom, when leaving his wife, M. de Saint-Huberty had not gone away empty-handed. This last time he had carried off from Warsaw, not only his wife's ready money, but even the costumes which she had to wear on the stage; so that she was left, not only without pecuniary resources, but almost without clothes. Happily Mme. de Saint-Huberty had inspired with sympathy a generous Polish lady, the Princess Lubomirska, who bought her the necessary wearing apparel, and gave her hospitality for three

months in her own house, or, as the Poles say, "palace."

The prima donna's husband had now established himself at Vienna, where he arranged to open an opera house on a magnificent scale. So, at least, he assured his wife in a letter, which also informed her that he had retained for her in his new company an excellent position. The unfortunate singer had at last, however, after so many deceptions, become distrustful; and she was encouraged in her unwillingness to join her husband by the Princess Lubomirska. But at length Saint-Huberty pleaded so eloquently in the letters which he continued to send that his wife gave way, and, in spite of the Princess's remonstrances, started for Vienna.

She had no sooner reached her destination than she found, as the Princess had anticipated, that her husband's statements as to the company he had formed, the magnificent position which he had reserved for his beloved wife, and so on, were pure inventions. All he wanted his wife for was to save him from starvation. He knew that she would arrive with money in her pocket,

and whatever she had he at once appropriated. Before long, however, he was obliged to quit Vienna secretly, as he had before quitted Warsaw and Berlin; and Mme. de Saint-Huberty now found herself alone, and without resources, free to go wherever she might think fit. She had long desired to make an appearance at the Opera of Paris, where Gluck was now supreme. She started then for Paris, and on her arrival hastened to call on the great composer, who had just obtained an immense success with *Armide*. Gluck at once saw what a charming artist had placed herself at his disposal. He immediately recommended her for an engagement, and on the 23d of September 1777 she made her first appearance at Paris as Mélisse, in the opera of *Armide*. "She has an agreeable voice," wrote the critic of *Le Mercure de France*, in his account of her opening performance. "She sings and acts with much delicacy of expression. She appears to be an excellent musician, and she needs only a little stage experience in order to gain greater development for her voice, and greater ease for her acting."

Her success was in a great measure due to the care with which Gluck himself had taught her. Scandal has, of course, something to say on this head. "Is it likely," people asked, "that Gluck would teach her for nothing? and how could she pay any money?" These malicious suggestions were probably made by some unprincipled Piccinnist. Nothing, meanwhile, is more natural than that a composer should take an interest in a singer well fitted to impersonate his most important creations.

The news that Mme. de Saint-Huberty had achieved a great success at the Opera of Paris was sure before long to reach her husband, when, it need scarcely be said, he hurried to the scene of his wife's triumphs, in order to congratulate her, and see what she could do for him. The poor woman could not let her worthless husband starve, and she obtained for him the place of wardrobe-keeper at the Opera; which, for a man in the habit of carrying off other people's garments and raising money on them, was scarcely a proper appointment.

Mme. de Saint-Huberty now lived by herself.

She would not allow her husband to share her abode, until she could feel convinced that he had mended his ways, though, meanwhile, she was imprudent enough to allow him to call upon her.

As wardrobe-keeper the retired impresario gave the liveliest dissatisfaction, and before long he was driven from his post. He revenged himself by writing, circulating, and reading aloud in public places, whenever he had the opportunity, a libellous attack on the administration of the Opera. He still continued to visit his wife, but only to get money from her, and, if necessary, extort it by means of threats, and even blows. Unable to obtain cash, he would seize any valuable objects he could lay his hands upon, and carry them off. At last he called one day when his wife was absent, and made a clean sweep of all her portable property. She was now obliged to appeal to the police, and did so in the following plaint:—

"In the year 1778, Friday, 31st July at nine o'clock in the evening, at the court, and before us,

Joseph Chesnon, the younger, Advocate attached to the Parliament, Counsellor of the King, Commissary at the Châtelet of Paris, appeared Anne-Antoinette Clavel, called Saint-Huberty, King's pensioner at the Opera, who told us that Saint-Huberty, who claims to be her husband, in virtue of a pretended act of celebration at Berlin, has abused the confidence of the complainant for nearly three years, in order to instal himself in her abode, and remain there in spite of her; to demean himself as master, and even to maltreat her; he nevertheless several times left the house, but always carried away with him jewels and other property of the complainant, which he pledged and sold. He would again force his way in, but with empty hands, and the complainant was unable to do anything against such persecution, being without her papers. Finally, this very day, while she was at the Opera, the said Saint-Huberty again abused her confidence, and profited by her absence to carry off the goods, papers and music of the complainant, including music which belongs to the Opera. She finds herself in the greatest trouble; and

the said Saint-Huberty is cunning enough to ask her by a letter, dated Wednesday, the 29th inst., for papers and goods which he has already taken the precaution to carry off. For which reasons, and in order that she may enjoy peace at home, which the said Saint-Huberty has for a long time prevented her from enjoying, and to force the Saint-Huberty to give her back her property, papers and music, especially that which belongs to the Opera, she has come to lodge the present plaint against the said Saint-Huberty, requiring from us the Act which we have given, and signing it in our presence."

On an order from the Lieutenant of Police a portion of the property stolen by Saint-Huberty was restored; and Mme. Saint Huberty, with the police on her side, might now flatter herself with the hope that she was safe from further attacks and depredations on the part of her husband. But on the 31st of August, just one month after her lodgment of the plaint above reproduced, she was quietly asleep, when she was suddenly awakened by an irruption of four men, among whom she

at once recognised the villainous Saint-Huberty. Pointing to a man attired in the familiar black garb of a commissary of police, the husband rushed to his wife's bed and called out: "The pockets, gentlemen! Seize her pockets!" It may have been customary in those days for ladies to have pockets in their night-dresses. It appears, in any case, from the narrative of this scandalous scene as given by M. de Goncourt, on the strength of a formal plaint afterwards laid by Mme. de Saint-Huberty, that the four men seized her pockets, which she defended as well as she could. They then dragged her, nearly naked, into the middle of the room, and there her husband, while the man in the black garments held her arms, showered blows upon her, and, taking a pair of scissors he had with him, cut the ribands of her pockets so savagely that, with the points of the scissors, he wounded her in several places. At last Saint-Huberty, having obtained possession of the keys, opened the cupboards, and turned them inside out, addressing at the same time to his wife the most frightful insults. Now came in a fifth person, also clad in black, who proclaimed himself the

procurator of the husband. While all this was going on, the men laughed among themselves, paid no heed to the poor woman, who was on the ground in her chemise, and left unanswered her questions as to their right to act as they were doing.

The whole affair was a farce—a tragic farce for poor Mme. de Saint-Huberty—but an acted scene in any case; suggested no doubt to Saint-Huberty partly by his theatrical experiences, partly by the deceptions which he had so often practised in real life. When the sham commissary and the sham procurator had gone away, the unfortunate singer found that she had been robbed of a pair of diamond buckles of the value of six louis.

CHAPTER III.

The cruel ill-treatment received by Mme. de Saint-Huberty at the hands of her profligate husband was made the subject of an inquiry directed by a

regent of the Faculty of Medicine, who reported as follows:—

"We, the undersigned, Doctor, Regent of the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Paris and Master in Surgery of the same city, on the requisition of the lady Antoinette Clavel, of the Royal Academy of Music, wife of Philippe-Croisilles de Saint-Huberty, citizen of Paris, certify that we went to the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, opposite the Rue de Bailleul, in the house of the said lady, whom we found in her bed, complaining of violent pains in her head, but without fever; and, by the examination we made, we found punctures as if made with the points of scissors, or other instruments, one on the right forearm and two on the lower part of the same arm, a contusion with swelling at the top of the left arm, two severe contusions on the middle and outside part of the right leg, and one on the middle and posterior portion of the right leg, one light contusion on the middle part of the coronal on the left, and, moreover, a difficulty in breathing, and a painful sensitiveness in other parts of the body, the result of violence and pressure, for

which we have prescribed the fitting remedies; in faith of which we have drawn up the present declaration, to serve and weigh according to its worth.—*Paris, September* 2*d* 1778.—GILLET, Master in Surgery."

Mme. de Saint-Huberty's plaint did not lead to any steps being taken against her husband; but when the complainant threatened to demand her retirement from the Opera, "unless her personal safety were guaranteed," she received the assurance that she need no longer fear the visits and assaults of her husband. The unhappy prima donna had not yet, however, liberated herself from her husband's persecutions. She had previously taken every precaution; including the drawing up of a formal act which her husband had been made to sign. By this deed he abandoned all claims to her salary, and to emoluments of all kinds that might come to her from singing at concerts or other entertainments.

M. de Saint-Huberty, however—the original, it may well be, of M. de Saint-Bertrand in Ernest Feydeau's *Mari de la Danseuse*—was a cunning

rascal. He had bound himself to claim no portion of his wife's salary. But by law she still remained answerable for his debts; and he now prepared to obtain money from her through the claims of fictitious creditors, for, had the pretended debts been genuine, we may be sure that M. de Saint-Huberty would never have troubled himself to facilitate their payment. On the demand of a young woman named Guérin, who declared herself a creditor for the sum of four hundred and eighty-nine francs against M. de Saint-Huberty, and against the joint household of M. de Saint-Huberty and his wife, a formal opposition was made to the payment of Mme. de Saint-Huberty's salary; and a few days afterwards this opposition was declared good and valid, the directors and treasurers of the Opera being thereupon ordered to deliver over to Croisilles de Saint-Huberty all sums due to his wife until his debts were fully paid.

In vain did Mme. de Saint-Huberty represent that she knew nothing of Mdlle. Guérin; that she owed her nothing, and had never been called upon by her, before the legal proceedings, to pay any debt. Mme. de Saint-Huberty was informed

that she could draw no further pay from the Opera until she caused the order secured by her husband to be rescinded.

She began by sending to her lawyer M. de Saint-Huberty's renunciation of all her earnings, together with a copy of the surgeon's official report as to the wounds and injuries which he had inflicted upon her. She pointed out that, apart from his other claims, her husband required to be kept by her, and continued as follows:—

"Did anyone ever hear of a man being supported by a woman? Before he was anything, he somehow lived. He says that he gave me masters, and that they put him to expense. I have ten witnesses who will affirm that I had them before knowing him, and, moreover, that I earned money enough to pay the expenses of all these masters . . . . Furthermore, when I was in Poland, my property was separated from his by a legal act, of which the original is in the hands of M. Mascassies. The certificate of the doctor, which you ask for, is in the hands of M. Amelot (one of the Ministers)."

M. Edmond de Goncourt, in his interesting work on the life and letters of Saint-Huberty, gives abundant extracts from the pleadings in the case of Mme. de Saint-Huberty against her husband. The theatrical lawsuits, which from time to time varied the generally dry occupations of the Paris advocates, were then, as now, read by the public with great avidity; and the counsel on these occasions, knowing that the eyes of France were upon them, would sometimes indulge in extraordinary flights of rhetoric. It was argued on behalf of Mme. de Saint-Huberty that, apart from the injustice of requiring her to support a profligate husband, who had robbed her, insulted her, and inflicted upon her grave personal injuries, she was entitled, by the very constitution of the Opera, to have the full and absolute disposal of her appointed salary. The King had said of this establishment, in letters-patent granted August 12th, 1769, that it was "not less agreeable to foreigners than to the nation itself," and that its magnificence contributed to the embellishment of the capital. Mme. de Saint-Huberty's advocate, Mâitre Potel, asserted in favour of his

client the immunity established in favour of all persons of both sexes engaged at the Opera, so that they did not need, in case of minority, the consent of their father, mother or guardian, and did not need, in the case of married women, the consent of their husbands to draw their salary, and give their receipt for the same without any authorisation. He then laid stress on the intention of the founders to regulate things in such a manner that the salaries of those engaged at the Opera should serve for their personal subsistence, beyond all possibility of their being taken from them under no matter what pretext.

Heard at the Châtelet, the case seems to have been decided against the unfortunate Mme. de Saint-Huberty, whereupon appeal was made to the Parliament of Paris.

On the 19th of March 1779 the case came before the Parliament, when Mme. de Saint-Huberty was defended by Mâitre Mascassies; "one of those pleaders," says M. de Goncourt, "immortalised by Racine in his famous comedy." The advocate traced the history of the stage from its origin, pointed out the influence of the fall of Constan-

tinople on the *Mysteries*, expatiated on the operas of Lully and Rameau, and ultimately inquired if Mdlle. Guérin were really the creditor of Mdlle. Clavel.

The Parliament of Paris, more just than the court below, decided in favour of the plaintiff; and Mdlle. Guérin's claim was dismissed. The distraint obtained by her on Mme. de Saint-Huberty's property was annulled, and the two accomplices, Mdlle. Guerin and M. de Saint-Huberty, were condemned to pay the costs.

During the law proceedings between Mme. de Saint-Huberty and Mdlle. Guérin, M. de Saint-Huberty's representative, the director of the Opera had, to his great personal convenience, kept for himself the money which, under ordinary circumstances, he would have had to pay to the prima donna. Although then the Parliament of Paris had declared Mme. de Saint-Huberty entitled to receive her salary, she found it impossible to get it, the impecunious director wanting it for himself. This official seems to have been willing enough to play into M. de Saint-Huberty's hands: and soon, in spite of the judgment given by the

Parliament of Paris, fresh caveats were lodged against the payment of Mme. de Saint-Huberty's salary, so that, between the fraudulent director and her villainous husband, the poor woman could get nothing.

It must not be supposed that Mme. de Saint-Huberty received anything like the salary of a modern prima donna. The period of large salaries, which had existed in England since the first introduction of Italian opera under Handel, had not yet begun in France; and all that Mme. de Saint-Huberty was at this time entitled to draw amounted only to three hundred francs a month.

It was evident that Mme. de Saint-Huberty would enjoy no peace until she could free herself altogether from her husband's persecution by a formal dissolution of marriage. Divorce was at this time impossible in France, though not many years later it was to be introduced by the revolutionary Government. A marriage, however, might be annulled under certain circumstances, as when the ceremony had been performed without the consent of the parents, or without the presence of the parish priest, or without due publication of the banns.

Mme. de Saint-Huberty now took steps for liberating herself finally from her husband; and, on the three grounds just specified, the secret marriage which she had contracted as a minor in Germany was declared null and void. The husband's father, who was an honourable man, had supported the demand, and the husband himself had been induced to allow the matter to rest with "the prudence of the court." In pronouncing their decision, the judges took into consideration the fact that there were no children born of the marriage; and the divorce was doubtless due to the infamous manner in which the husband had systematically treated his wife. This, however, does not seem to have been touched upon in the formal pleadings.

The end of Croisilles de Saint-Huberty, according to one of the gossiping chronicles of the time, quoted by M. Edmond de Goncourt, was a strange one indeed. To get rid of him, the Minister Amelot, who at this time took a great interest in Mme. de Saint-Huberty, gave him a company of grenadiers, and sent him in command of it to some distant provincial town.

Up to this time Mme. de Saint-Huberty had been miserably poor; living in wretched apartments, and wearing her one black dress for such a time that the other members of the company used to compare her to a dealer in second-hand garments, and to call her "Madame la Ressource." Gluck, hearing her so addressed, said that she was well named, for that with her brilliant talent she would soon be the chief resource of the Opera.

The associates who had derided her were as poorly paid as herself; but they did not depend on their operatic earnings alone. Apart from her poverty, Mme. de Saint-Huberty, with a husband constantly in one way or another preying upon her, had more need of "protection" than anyone. But there was nothing mercenary in her character, and though she was ultimately to fall into the ways of other operatic singers, one must render her the justice to say that her self-respect saved her for a long time and in the midst of the most trying circumstances.

Arthur Young, in his famous account of France immediately before the Revolution, speaks of passing from a drawing-room in which Mme. de

Saint-Huberty gained five hundred louis by her singing, to a hut in which a family of peasants were dying of hunger. Without invalidating Young's striking contrast, it is difficult to believe that Mme. de Saint-Huberty was at any time a tenth part so well paid as Arthur Young imagined. At the Opera, where she of course played principal parts, her salary never seems to have exceeded six thousand francs a year (£240); to which must be added another six thousand of "gratifications," or exceptional allowances. "Proud in her distress," says Emile Gaboriau, in his *Comédiennes Adorées*, "kept up by ambition which gnawed at her heart, she lived a solitary life in her garret." Croisy * made his appearance there but seldom; he knew that there was no money to be had. From morning to evening she worked, studied, practised incessantly. In time her voice became more supple. She got it well under control. She taught herself to move her

* Gaboriau spells the heroic name as above. In the official acts he is called "Croisil." According to Edmond de Goncourt, he was the son of Croisilles, a merchant of Metz. "De Saint-Huberty" was, in any case, but an ornamental name superadded to the one really belonging to him.

long thin arms with grace; she improved the play of her physiognomy, and finally got rid of her deplorable Alsatian pronunciation. It was not until after her definitive separation from her husband, through the formal annullation of her marriage, that she was entered on the list of the Opera as a permanent member; and the year afterwards, in November 1780, she was entrusted with the part of Angélique in the *Roland* (*Orlando*) of Piccinni. Neither the composer nor anyone else believed that the opera would succeed; it was given up beforehand as a bad job. The evening of the first representation, when he was about to start for the theatre, his family refused to accompany him, and did all that was possible to keep him at home. His wife, his children, his friends were in tears. Their despair could scarcely have been greater had he been on his way to the scaffold.

Piccinni himself, however, was calm with the calmness of conscious rectitude.

"My children," he said, in Italian, "we are not in the midst of savages, but of the politest people on the face of the earth. If they do not like

me as a musician, they will at least respect me as a man and a stranger."

"Wagner," remarks Gaboriau, "would scarcely have said so much after the second representation of *Tannhauser*." The first representation of *Tannhauser*, it must here be observed, was listened to by the Parisians in silence; it was only at the second that shrieking and hooting were heard.

Piccinni was altogether wrong about his opera. It proved not a failure, but a triumph. More than a hundred persons followed him home after the performance. He, on his part, full of emotion, did nothing but ask for Mme. de Saint-Huberty.

"Where is she?" he called out. "I must see her. I must embrace her. I must tell her that to her alone success is due."

Soon afterwards Mme. de Saint-Huberty achieved a new triumph as Lise in *Le Seigneur bienfaisant*: a part she played with so much pathos that she is said to have fallen ill from excess of emotion. Her next success was obtained in a comic character, that of Rosette in Grétry's *Embarras des Riches*. This piece, in spite of the charm by which the music is said to have been distinguished,

fell, as so many operas have fallen, from the badness of the libretto. It was the production of one Lourdet de Sans-Terre, to whom was given the appropriate name of Lourdet de Sans-Tête. In this strange work an Athenian nobleman of the time of Pericles is made to fast during Lent. Opera girls are introduced, and a rich merchant, wishing to be munificent, gives someone a louis d'or; while, in the inevitable ballet, dances are executed by American savages.

CHAPTER IV.

But Mme. de Saint-Huberty was now to appear in the greatest of all her parts, that of Dido in Piccinni's opera of the same name. The Queen had just conferred upon the Italian composer a fixed pension, instead of the annual presents which he had hitherto received; and he wished to acknowledge her generosity by producing a new

masterpiece. Marmontel proposed the subject of Dido. Piccinni at once accepted it, and retired into the country to compose the work. When the opera was finished, Mme. de Saint-Huberty, for whom the principal part was intended, met the composer at Marmontel's country house. She dined with the two collaborators, and afterwards sang at sight the whole of her music. "She entered into the spirit of it so thoroughly," said Marmontel, "that I fancied she was on the stage. Piccinni was delighted."

At this particular time Mme. de Saint-Huberty was entitled to leave of absence, and she had made arrangements for a visit to the south of France. She took her part with her, telling the composer that he could rehearse the opera without her, as she should certainly know her music quite thoroughly before she came back, and probably before anybody else would be ready.

The piece, then, was put into rehearsal, while Dido made a highly successful tour in Provence. She excited everywhere the greatest enthusiasm. At Aix, however, she unfortunately caught cold.

and such a severe one that for a time she lost her voice. Meanwhile, *Dido* was being actively rehearsed. The part of the heroine was taken by a chorus singer who, without attempting to sing Mme. de Saint-Huberty's music from beginning to end, read the part, and did her best to replace the prima donna in the concerted pieces. When Mme. de Saint-Huberty returned to Paris, she had quite recovered her voice, and the piece was ready for representation.

"The part of Dido," she wrote to one of her friends, "having been composed for me, for my voice, and being the only very interesting part in the piece, it will be impossible to give it anywhere without me. This looks like conceit on my part, but I will explain the matter to you. The part of Dido is all acting. The recitative is so well composed that it is impossible to sing it.* A number of persons had attended the general rehearsals of *Dido*, and had come to the conclusion that it was one of Piccinni's

* "Le récitatif est si bien fait qu'il est impossible de le chanter." This itself needs explanation. Apparently it was thought desirable that the recitative should be declaimed but not sung.

worst productions. But Piccinni consoled himself by saying: 'Wait till my Dido comes!' At the first rehearsal which took place with myself in the part, everyone said: 'Why, he has recomposed the whole work.' This, however, was out of the question, only four days had elapsed since the previous rehearsal. This was what Piccinni said in reply:—

"'No, gentlemen, I have changed nothing. But until now *Dido* was being played without Dido.'"

It was at Fontainbleau, in presence of the King, that *Dido* was given for the first time. The success of the piece, and especially the success of the actress, was beyond all expectations. Never had such enthusiasm been witnessed at the Court. Even Louis XVI. was delighted, though, as a rule, he did not like opera, his special aversion being for comic opera which was not really comic. "Je n'aime pas les bouffons qui ne me font pas rire," he said, on one melancholy occasion, when a performance at the Comédie Italienne had not inspired him with any degree of mirth.

The praise which he is said to have bestowed upon the opera of *Dido* was not, however, such

as could have delighted the composer. "It has given me as much pleasure," he said, "as a fine tragedy."

As for the principal singer, he at once ordered that a pension of fifteen hundred livres (francs) should be given to her; and he sent Marshal de Duras to compliment her, and to tell her what delight she had caused him.

"This," writes an eyewitness, "was the finest scene of the evening. When Marshal de Duras arrived behind the scenes, followed by a crowd of courtiers in gala costume, Mme. de Saint-Huberty had not yet had time to change her stage attire. She was standing up with the crown on her head, draped in the scarlet mantle of the Queen of Carthage. Marmontel and Piccinni, intoxicated with joy, had thrown themselves at her feet, and were kissing her hands. They only rose when they saw M. de Duras come forward to repeat the King's words. The actress listened to the Marshal, and her countenance, still animated by inspiration, became illumined with the joy of this new triumph. The blush of pride rose to her forehead. It was a wonderful sight.

There was so much grandeur, so much nobility and majesty in her bearing, with these men at her feet, that better even than during the representation she gave the idea of the Queen of Carthage. All the great nobles present seemed only her courtiers."

Dido at this moment was indeed a queen. She was still, however, but a theatrical queen. A few days later one of the great nobles of the Court went to pay a visit to Mme. Saint-Huberty, and found the sublime Dido "huddled up in an old petticoat, and playing at piquet with her little page, on a table covered with a dish-cloth."

At Paris *Dido* obtained a greater success than even at Fontainbleau. The first representation, which took place at the Opera on the 1st of December 1783, caused indescribable enthusiasm. The public could not find means to express its admiration. After Dido's great air, "Ah, que je fus bien inspirée!" the audience rose in a mass, and the performance was interrupted for nearly a quarter of an hour by frantic applause. The succeeding air, "Ah, prends pitié de ma faiblesse!" raised the delirium of the audience to the highest

pitch; and now, by a reaction, the whole house is said to have "burst into tears."

The newspaper critics, the chroniclers, the private correspondents of the various crowned heads in Russia and Germany, who were kept regularly informed by their literary correspondents of all that took place at Paris, spoke with one accord in praise of *Dido* the opera and of Dido the dramatic vocalist.

"Mme. de Saint-Huberty," wrote Bachaumont, "played the part of Dido with the highest talent. She rose above her ordinary level, and showed herself not less a great actress than an accomplished singer. Impossible to be more pathetic."

Grimm, so seldom moved to enthusiasm, becomes enthusiastic, and almost lyrical. "It would be impossible," he wrote, "to combine in a higher degree the most exquisite sensibility, the most perfect taste, and the most profound attention to dramatic requirements. The acting was so expressive and so pathetic as to be really worthy of the noble but unhappy Queen of Carthage. She sings like Todi; she has the dramatic genius of Clairon. Such a model has not for a long time

been seen on the stage, and will not soon be seen again."

Ginguené wrote as follows:—"The talent of this sublime actress has its origin in her extreme sensibility. An air might be better sung, but it would be impossible to give to any air, to any recitative, truer, more passionate expression. No action could be more dramatic than hers; no silence more eloquent. It is impossible to forget her terrible dumb-show, her tragic immobility, and the frightful expression of her countenance during the long ritornello of the chorus of priests, towards the end of the third act, and while the chorus is being sung."

At the performances she did no more than replace herself in the position in which she had naturally found herself at the first of the final rehearsals. Someone spoke to her of the impression which she seemed to feel, and which she communicated so fully to the audience. "I really experience it," she replied; "after the tenth bar, I was all but dead."

"This reply," writes Gaboriau, in his chapter on Mme. de Saint-Huberty, reveals the secret of

the great lyric tragedian's talent. An actress of genius, she knew how to keep her head; but she gave up her whole heart, her whole soul. She really suffered the grief which she expressed in so heart-rending a manner. She really felt as if she must die. To such a point was this true, that after each performance she was so exhausted that it needed several hours for her to recover herself."

Castil-Blaze, writing with a very different knowledge of the musical art from that possessed by M. Gaboriau (who tells us, in some remarks on Saint-Huberty's singing, that one of her airs was "d'un *diapason* très étendu"), declares of Mme. de Saint-Huberty that she was the first "vocalist" who appeared at the French Opera. At the concerts of sacred music known as the *Concerts Spirituels*, she held her place by the side of Mara and Todi, who were never engaged at the French Opera. She obtained, indeed, such a success at these concerts that Métra, writing on the subject, seems to regard her as too dangerous a rival of the two vocalists, who, as vocalists, were certainly more eminent than Saint-Huberty. "Why should I not

say," he writes, "that there is nothing 'spiritual' in hearing at these concerts Mme. de Saint-Huberty, who, in the most voluptuous costume, with naked bosom, with eyes full of voluptuousness, recites in a passionate voice the Psalms of David?"

CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE, the success of *Dido* was fully maintained at each succeeding representation. At the twelfth performance an incident took place which marks a point in the history of the lyric stage. Dido, in the final scene of the opera, had just stabbed herself with the sword of Æneas, had just uttered one dying cry of grief and love, when suddenly a crown of laurel was handed to the orchestral conductor to be placed at her feet. The house rose in a fury of excitement, and called out that the crown should be placed on the singer's head.

The Intendant, M. de la Ferté, wrote on this subject, in one of his reports:—

"On Friday evening last a crown was thrown on to the stage bearing this inscription: 'To the immortal Saint-Huberty.' The actress who was on the stage with her picked it up, and placed it on Mme. de Saint-Huberty's head.

"This business, apparently the result of an arrangement made beforehand, and in which Mme. de Saint-Huberty may herself have taken part, deserves attention; for those who in this manner give crowns (a thing previously without example at the theatre in connection with an actor) might equally accustom themselves to throw baked apples or oranges, as happens in England to actors who do not meet with approbation. The confusion would then be beyond remedy."

The actress referred to by M. de la Ferté as having picked up the crown, and placed it on Dido's head, was Mdlle. Gavaudan, one of Mme. de Saint-Huberty's most intimate friends.

Mme. de Saint-Huberty was, as we have already

seen, full of generosity, and at the theatre lost no opportunity of helping on struggling artists who had the same difficulties to contend with which she herself had found so painful. One of her *protégées*, Mdlle. Maillard, rewarded her for her kindness by trying to get from her the part of Dido. The ambition of the ungrateful woman "o'erleaped itself." Profiting by a passion with which she had taken care to inspire the Intendant de la Ferté, old, and slightly imbecile, she secured an appearance, but only to be hissed off the stage, in a part which, more than any other, Mme. de Saint-Huberty had made entirely her own.

A day or two after her coronation in the part of Dido, Mme. de Saint-Huberty, on an off-night at the Opera, attended a performance at the Comédie Italienne. No sooner was she perceived in her box than the whole audience rose, the performance stopped, and everyone cried out, "Vive la Reine de Carthage."

For Mme. de Saint-Huberty in opera, as for Mdlle. Sallé in ballet, Mdlle. Clairon in tragedy, and Mme. Favart in comedy and comic opera, is

claimed the honour of having played parts in the costumes historically appropriate to them. The costumes worn at that time on the French stage (nor were they much better on our own) were simply ludicrous. But the public was accustomed to them, and the managers found it more economical to keep to costumes already in the wardrobe than to order new ones for every fresh piece. In the heroic operas of Gluck, Achilles and Agamemnon wore wigs, curled and powdered, surmounted by plumed helmets; while their legs were encased in pale green or pink rose breeches, with clocked silk stockings and shoes with red heels. It is recorded of Gluck that, when Vestris wished to introduce a chacone into one of his operas, the composer objected to it on the ground that "the Greeks, whose manners we are endeavouring to depict," knew nothing of such a dance. It was apparently only to anachronisms in music and dancing that Gluck objected.

The costume of the actresses was, if possible, still more absurd. They all wore trains, the length of which was in proportion to the importance of the part. The train of an ordinary actress was held

by a page dressed in black or white. But actresses representing queens were entitled to two trains and two pages, who followed them everywhere, into palace gardens, and even into dungeons, when by an adverse fate they were condemned to imprisonment in some solitary tower. "Nothing is more amusing," writes a critic of the time, "nothing more comic than the perpetual movement of these little rascals, who have to run after the actress when she is tearing about the stage in moments of distress. Their activity keeps them in a constant state of perspiration. Their embarrassment, their blunders, excite general laughter. Thus a farce is always going on which diverts the spectator in an agreeable manner when the situation is too touching or too sad."

When she appeared as Dido, Mme. de Saint-Huberty would have no little boys running after her — ready to pursue her even to the funeral pyre. She, at the same time, threw off the conventional train, and all the trappings which had habitually accompanied it, to appear only in the tunic designed for her by an artist of the period who had studied archæology. The operatic

directors strongly objected to the introduction of archæologists and other costly pretenders into their domain. "If," as one director is accused of saying, "this fury for truthfulness of costume enabled us to save a little money! But, on the contrary, models must be brought in, men of learning must be consulted, artists have to be paid; and all this costs money, much more money than the dresses to which we are accustomed. Besides, when the piece is laid aside, all the costumes appropriate to it have to be laid aside too."

When the time arrived for taking *Dido* into the provinces Mme. de Saint-Huberty began her tour at Marseilles, where she gave twenty-three representations with the greatest possible success. As her departure drew near, it was resolved to organise a *fête* in her honour; and a very magnificent one it must have been. The vessels in the harbour hoisted their colours, salutes were fired, and in the evening the entire city was illuminated. An eight-oared gondola, lined with satin, and furnished with velvet cushions, had been prepared; and on her arrival it was offered to Mme. de Saint-Huberty by the ladies of Marseilles,

who insisted, moreover, on attiring her in a magnificent Greek costume. The gondola went out to sea escorted by more than a hundred rowing-boats and sailing vessels. Barges full of musicians took part in the water procession, and aquatic sports were gone through, in which Mme. de Saint-Huberty crowned the winners.

These rejoicings were renewed on land. A platform had been erected, on which, as in an opera, the queen of the entertainment took her place in the midst of a crowd of worshippers. Before her the national dances of Provence were performed; and when this open-air ballet was at an end, a banquet was held, at which Mme. de Saint-Huberty, occupying the seat of honour, received the homage of two hundred of the most distinguished inhabitants.

When, after the festivities, she drove home, an extra carriage was found necessary for the wreaths and crowns which had been offered to her.

At Toulouse, if the *fêtes* given in Mme. de Saint-Huberty's honour were less splendid, the enthusiasm of the public was equally great. In

the third act of *Dido*, the performance at the last representation was suddenly stopped, when a dozen young girls, dressed in white, advanced towards Mme. de Saint-Huberty to offer her a basket of flowers, surmounted with a crown.

At Strasburg—the city, it will be remembered, where she first appeared on the stage—she received an honour which will be remembered when all the others have long been forgotten. An artillery officer of the garrison, Napoleon Bonaparte by name, who, according to recent historians, was unable to spell, showed that he could write very ingenious verses; and these he addressed to the heroine of the moment. Napoleon appreciated good music, by preference that of the Italian composers; and Mme. de Saint-Huberty, in the part of Dido, must have impressed him greatly in order to draw from him the following stanza, which I dare not call a sonnet, but which is something like one:—

"Romains qui vous vantez d'une illustre origine,
Voyez d'où dépendait votre empire naissant:
Didon n'eut pas de charme assez puissant
Pour arrêter la fuite où son amant s'obstine;

Mais si l'autre Didon, ornement de ces lieux,
Eût été Reine de Carthage,
Il eût, pour la servir, abandonné ses dieux,
Et votre beau pays serait encor sauvage."

At Lyons, where Dido met with the same applause as at other cities, she was much struck by the local tenor, Saint-Aubin by name, who became to her a sort of Æneas, not only on the stage, but also in private life. When she returned to Paris, nothing would satisfy her but to have him engaged at the Opera; and her influence with the Minister was sufficient to procure from him an order on the subject, which the tenor, who seems to have been attached to the Lyons Theatre, was, willing or unwilling, obliged to obey.

The royal command was in the following terms:—

"By order of the King,—

"M. de Saint-Aubin, alto (haute-contre) of the Lyons Theatre, is ordered to come immediately to Paris, in order to appear at the Opera.

"Done," etc.

In vain did the Lyons manager reply that the services of M. de Saint-Aubin could scarcely be

dispensed with, inasmuch as there was no one to replace him, that he owed the management three thousand four hundred and thirty-three francs and four sous, and that Mdlle. Destouches, who had undertaken the direction of the Opera, and whose affairs were already in confusion, would be ruined by the singer's departure. But Mme. de Saint-Huberty gained the day. Saint-Aubin in due time made his *début* at Paris, when he was pronounced by the critics a tolerably good singer, but (alas for the taste of Dido!) far too stout. After a year's love duets with Mme. de Saint-Huberty, the stout tenor remembered that he had a wife and two children at Lyons, and showed a strong inclination to rejoin them. Mme. de Saint-Huberty had again recourse to the good offices of the Minister, and a new royal command was now issued, by which Saint-Aubin's wife and children were ordered to Paris.

The prima donna's exigencies seem about this time to have given much trouble to the management of the Opera. She received nothing in the way of salary that can be compared with what is paid in the present day to a singer of quite

inferior merit. But she could not forget that during her provincial tours she had been remunerated at the rate of thirty thousand francs (£1200) a year; and she looked upon herself, all the time she was singing in Paris, as shamefully underpaid. It may here be suggested that the five hundred livres which M. de Goncourt, on the authority of Arthur Young, makes her receive for her performances at one evening party, were possibly five hundred French livres or francs—certainly not five hundred pounds sterling. It is only in our own time that such sums have been paid to vocalists, or rather to one vocalist, Mme. Adelina Patti; for singing, not at private parties, but at theatres or concerts.

If, however, Mme. de Saint-Huberty, with her four hundred a year, was ill-paid at the Opera, she, perhaps for that very reason, exercised an influence such as could scarcely be tolerated by a private manager in the present day. We have seen that if she wanted to sing with a particular tenor, she caused him to be ordered for the Opera by royal command. We find her, moreover, protesting in quite a menacing tone against the

dismissal of this member of the company, and insisting that this other should be forthwith liberated from prison. In the latter case, the incarcerated one had evidently done her best to provoke the director. But she was one of Mme. de Saint-Huberty's particular friends; and the all-powerful prima donna required that without any further ado she should be set free. Mdlle. Gavaudan, the young lady in question, had declared that she would on no account sing in the now-forgotten opera called the *Golden Fleece.* The director, according to the custom in such cases, reported the matter to the police, and the recalcitrant singer was carried off to La Force, where she appears to have been treated as a first-class misdemeanant. She had been cast for a part in the opera of *Œnone,* in which the principal character was to be played by Mme. de Saint-Huberty, and the prima donna insisted upon her young friend being taken from prison and brought to her house, first to dine with her, and then to go to a grand rehearsal of Sacchini's new work. This arrangement seems to have filled the two friends, as it was sure to do,

with delight. Their gaiety, however, was not without one dark shade, for wherever Mdlle. Gavaudan went a police officer accompanied her. We may be quite sure, however, that Mme. de Saint-Huberty did not admit him into her dining-room. Here she and her young *protégée* seem to have enjoyed themselves immensely; and after the repast they went together, in the best spirits, to the rehearsal, where the prima donna said aloud to everyone who cared to hear her that the *Golden Fleece* was a wretched opera, and that her friend Gavaudan did quite right in refusing to have anything to do with such a work. She at the same time declared that, for such a trifle, it was absurd and unjust to keep a young lady in prison. She also told the manager of the Opera, Dauvergne, that, unless he reformed his ways, she would use her influence with the Ministry and the Court to get him turned out of his place. She, in fact, wrote to the Intendant, M. de la Ferté, to demand, not indeed the dismissal of Dauvergne, but the liberation of Gavaudan.

This time, however, Mme. de Saint-Huberty

did not gain her point. She had written to M. de la Ferté in such a tone of irony and menace that, standing upon his dignity, he refused to comply with her request. He had held his post of Intendant, he said, for thirty years, and had never before been accused of injustice. He quite agreed that Mdlle. Gavaudan was a very charming person, and essential to the pleasures of the public. But the manager had done quite right in insisting upon her accepting the part assigned to her, that of Calliope in the *Golden Fleece;* and it was with the sanction of the Ministry that the young lady's arrest had been ordered.

Mme. de Saint-Huberty became very sulky, and at the rehearsal of *Œnone* paid no attention to what was going on, but contented herself with observing the toes of her shoes. Mdlle. Gavaudan had now been informed that it was being seriously considered whether she should not be punished by solitary confinement in a genuine dungeon. The fair young prisoner took fright, and at once sent to the manager the following letter:—

"The orders of the Ministry, sire, being such

as you have communicated to me, I must submit to them, and play on Friday the part of Calliope in the *Golden Fleece,* since my liberty is at this price.

"I have the honour . . . .

"GAVAUDAN, THE YOUNGER."

But this spirited young person had not yet said her last word. On the day for which the performance of the *Golden Fleece* had been fixed, an official came to the prison in order to set her at liberty. She informed him that for the present she would remain where she was, that she had ordered her dinner, and intended to eat it. The official, however, had been ordered to take her out; and, after many arguments, and a slight exercise of force, he managed to get her into the street, telling her that she might afterwards go wherever she thought fit. She went back to the prison, where she dined copiously, not without wine. Then, in the liveliest condition, she went to the Opera, had a furious scene with the stage manager, who, during her imprisonment, had given her dressing-room to another

singer, and after a quarter of an hour's violent language calmed down, dressed herself for the part of Calliope, and sang very charmingly.

CHAPTER VI.

One constant cause of dispute between Mme. de Saint-Huberty and the management of the Opera, supported by the Minister, was her determination to wear the costumes appropriate to the parts she played. Such was the stupidity, the sordid economy of the directing powers, that she had always the greatest trouble in obtaining permission to substitute for the conventional costume of the operatic queen such dress as the personage she was to represent might fairly be supposed to have worn.

M. de la Ferté says, in one of his letters on this subject:—"I have just ordered Saint-Huberty's dress. This is terrible. The consulting committee of the Opera held one day a special general meet-

ing to consider whether Mme. de Saint-Huberty could really be allowed to have the costume she desired for the part of Armida. Madame de Saint-Huberty," said the report on the subject addressed to the Minister, "has sent us the design of a dress she requires for the part of Armida. The committee considering that this part, in which Mme. de Saint-Huberty has not yet been seen, might give to the work the charm of novelty, and procure for the Opera advantageous receipts during a series of representations, has thought it right to agree to Mme. de Saint-Huberty's expressed wish; the more so as she has no objection to share the part with Mdlle. Levasseur, it being arranged that, in case of illness, the costume made for this Opera shall be worn by the substitutes as well as by Mme. de Saint-Huberty herself."

In the margin of the report the following observation of the Minister appears:—"Good for this time only, and without the establishment of a precedent. All the members of the company must, without distinction, wear the dresses furnished to them by the administration of the Opera, so long as they are considered in a fit state to be worn."

Two years later, in 1786, there was a fresh dispute about the costumes of Penelope and of Alcestis; and M. de la Ferté felt it necessary to write to Mme. de Saint-Huberty the following letter:—

"It is not, madame, M. de la Laistre who decides what dresses are to be worn, but the persons appointed by the King to watch over the wardrobe and the expenses. I cannot disguise from you that at Fontainbleau there was much displeasure about the dress you exacted, and which, almost on your sole authority, you ordered for the part of Penelope, a dress which seemed in no way suitable either to the position of this princess, so long afflicted, or to the magnificence of the period, fabulous though it be. You must have noticed that it was not thought becoming for you to wear it at Paris. You now require a simpler dress for Alcestis. All I can do is to send your letter to M. Bocquet, that he may consult with M. Dauvergne, and see that what is necessary be done. You must be convinced of our desire to satisfy you in all reasonable things,

and to be generally agreeable to you. But, at the same time, you ought to understand that you are obliged to conform to established rules, like all the other members of the company, and like those who played the first parts before you; for if, instead of accepting the appointed costume, each one wished to dress according to individual taste, the result would be hopeless confusion, together with an expenditure both useless and ruinous for the King and for the Opera."

In September 1788 the director-general of the Opera wrote to M. de la Ferté that there would be a great dispute on the subject of Mme. de Saint-Huberty's dress in the part of Chimène, which might involve the making of six new dresses, two for her, and one for each of her four attendants.

Everyone in the present day will sympathise with Mme. de Saint-Huberty in her constant, though sometimes ineffectual, desire to obtain from the management a dress historically suitable to whatever part she was about to play. Whether she was equally right in rebelling against the

authority of the musical conductor may be questioned. Even now, the conductor most esteemed by singers is the one who will allow them at will to prolong their high notes, to introduce a profusion of unmeaning ornaments, and generally to take liberties with the time. When, on one occasion, Sophie Arnould found that she was at cross purposes with the *batteur de mesure*, she exclaimed, in answer to his representations: "La mesure? Quelle bête est-ce là!" Mme. de Saint-Huberty declared one day to the company assembled on the stage, "not like a reasonable woman, but like a fury," that M. Vion was incapable of holding the bâton, and that if he appeared any more in the orchestra to beat time, a duty for which he was entirely unfit, she, on her side, whatever might be the result, would undress herself, and refuse to sing her part.

Soon afterwards, before the season was at an end, and without asking anyone's permission, she started for Alsace, with the view of singing at the Strasburg theatre. But an order from the Minister forbade her appearance, and she was

at the same time summoned to return without delay to Paris.

At last Mme. de Saint-Huberty was so disgusted with her life at the Opera, and with the difficulties (many of them of her own creation) by which she was constantly surrounded, that she resolved to resign, and accordingly wrote to the director the following letter:—

"The trouble, the disgust, the vexation, caused to me by the reprimands and threats which your continual complaints bring upon me from the Ministry, far from increasing my courage, affect my health and strength, and will, at last, bring about what is so ardently desired: the annulment of my engagement, and my retirement from the theatre, for it is impossible for me to support any longer such persecution. You know, sir, that I am well aware how much you hate me, and that I expect to feel all the effects of your hatred."

CHAPTER VII.

Not having lost her voice, Mme. de Saint-Huberty did not retire from the Opera, not, at least, until some two years later, in 1790, the year after the outbreak of the Revolution. But Mme. de Saint-Huberty had now made the acquaintance of the man who was to influence the whole of her remaining life, Count Louis d'Antraigues, an intriguer in his way, like her first husband, but in a different way. Count d'Antraigues claimed to be a descendant of the d'Antraigues who was wounded by the side of Henry IV. at Coutras, and to whom the brave monarch afterwards addressed one of his most famous letters. When, in 1789, he represented his native province, Le Vivarais, in the Assembly of the States General, his claim, which would have entitled him to certain privileges, was contested. Soon afterwards the ancestry of which he had hitherto boasted would have done him much more harm than good, and the question was prudently enough allowed to subside. He

had begun life in the army, and leaving his regiment because, as scandal would have it, he had neglected to fight a duel which circumstances seemed to require, travelled for some years in foreign parts. But at the time of his becoming acquainted with Mme. de Saint-Huberty, he lived for a great part of every year at Paris, in the society of philosophers, actresses, men of science and politicians. He took a great interest in ballooning, and was the friend of the Montgolfiers and of Blanchard. He was on intimate terms with Rousseau. He was quite at home with the members of the Comédie Française, and he had been introduced to Mme. de Saint-Huberty as far back as 1783. For several years he corresponded with Mme. de Saint-Huberty when his absence in Le Vivarais prevented his seeing her; and his letters, which have been preserved, testify to his admiration and affection for the singer, though for some time there was no question in them of passionate love. One of his earliest letters is interesting, as showing that at the height of her fame Mme. de Saint-Huberty still led a simple life.

"I have heard enemies of yours," he writes "accuse you of meanness, and laugh at you for driving about Paris in a hired vehicle. But I also know many excellent and honourable persons who admire you on account of this very simplicity. Do you think that one can see without sympathy, without enthusiasm, a woman so much admired, so celebrated as you, drive out in a hackney carriage when she could so easily command the gilded chariot of vice and infamy? What can be finer than to see talent in all its brilliancy associated with the virtues of a noble soul? It is delightful, for those who can appreciate it, to be able to feel enthusiasm without alloy; it is glorious for the woman who inspires it not to excite in the heart of her admirers that regret which is always caused by seeing a sublime talent exercised by a man or woman who, personally, is contemptible. For you alone was reserved this glory."

Count d'Antraigues' correspondence with Mme. de Saint-Huberty extends over many years; and it can be seen from Mme. de Saint-Huberty's letters that she adopted all the philosophical and

scientific views of her future husband. She thinks as highly of the Montgolfiers as the Count himself. Some of Mme. de Saint-Huberty's letters are so well written that the Count accuses her of wasting her time in correcting them and copying them out afresh in order to show her wit.

After helping to the best of his ability to bring about the Revolution, the Count saw enough of the proceedings of the constituent Assembly to which he belonged to bewail its tendencies now that he clearly perceived them. He had published, in 1788, pamphlets on the "Rights of the People" and on the "Constitution of the Monarchy" —meaning, no doubt, its reconstitution. He accused the nobility of having formed in the nation a nation apart, a separate order of the state, which for centuries had kept the people in slavery. "The Third Estate," he wrote in a memorandum on the States General, "is the People, and the People is the basis of the State; it is the State itself."

The States General, however, had scarcely met when he began to change his opinions; and Mira-

beau, in a published letter addressed to him, accused Count d'Antraigues of turning like a weathercock, and of not knowing his own mind. The Count replied that he had written his book on the Rights of the People for quite another people, not for the cruel people he saw around him. He was now accused of open apostacy, and in 1790 found it prudent to quit France. He retired to Switzerland, and in April 1790 Mme. de Saint-Huberty joined him at Lausanne, where they were secretly married. By suddenly leaving France, Mme. de Saint-Huberty had caused herself to be regarded as an *émigrée;* and, though she returned to Paris for the express purpose of asserting her rights to property which she had acquired, her representations and demands led to nothing. The Bishop of Como, in whose diocese the Count d'Antraigues and Mme. de Saint-Huberty were married, had granted to the officiating priest permission, for grave reasons known to him, "to perform the ceremony without the usual proclamations, and without inquiries or proofs, at whatever time, whatever hour, and whatever place might be selected."

The day after the marriage, Count d'Antraigues addressed to his wife this letter:—

"I may die, my dear wife, and cannot acquit myself too soon of a sacred duty.

"There may be wanting to our union some formalities which, according to the law of France, are required for the legalisation of marriages; and imperious circumstances may prevent me from fulfilling these for some time to come. If I am to die before that time, I should wish you to render to my memory the honour due to it by rendering to yourself that which is also due to you. I declare, then, that after seven years of friendship, of mutual confidence, I have united by marriage to my fate that of the woman who had the courage to share my destiny; that on the 29th of December 1790, after having obtained from the Bishop of Como a dispensation for the publication of banns, and permission for us to marry at any time and place that might please us, I married you in the Château of Castel San Pietro, in presence of two priests as witnesses.

"With many reasons for keeping this marriage secret, I did not conceal from you the most important of all: the grief it would cause to my worthy and venerable mother. But I knew her, and was sure that, if she had to bewail my loss, she would forgive our secret union, and would recognise the wife of her son in the woman who watched over his fate, who softened its rigour, and who received the last sighs of his heart."

The Count now became the devoted servant of the Bourbons, and the agent of all the foreign courts who were willing to promote the restoration of the monarchy. The Count had only been able to scrape together some hundreds of pounds; and it was not until the death of the King, in 1793, that he received any pay for his services. It was only, indeed, at that time that his active services began, unless his publication of several pamphlets against the proceedings of the revolutionary Assembly in France can be so considered. He, at the same time, addressed letters to the various courts, and succeeded in

bringing about a joint understanding between those which were already opposed to the French Revolution.

Some years afterwards, the Count and Countess went to Venice, and were still there when the French took possession of the city. Count d'Antraigues was at this time specially attached to the service of Russia; and when Mordvinoff, the Russian Minister, about to quit the place, obtained from the French legation a passport for himself, his secretary and his attachés, he included among the latter the Count d'Antraigues, who, with his wife and a child born to them in Switzerland, travelled as part of the Minister's suite. At Trieste the carriages of the Russian Minister were surrounded by bayonets, and the various members were brought before Bernadotte, who was here in command. Mordvinoff exhibited the passport he had obtained from the French legation, on which Bernadotte said to him abruptly: "Tell me at once, which is the Count d'Antraigues?"

"It is I," replied d'Antraigues; and he was immediately arrested, in spite of Mordvinoff's repeated

declarations that the Count was attached to the service of Russia.

On the point of being taken back to Milan, d'Antraigues begged the Russian Minister to take charge of Mme. de Saint-Huberty.

"I have already offered," replied Mordvinoff, "but she will not hear of it. She insists on sharing your captivity."

Touched by so much devotion, the Count exclaimed that Mme. de Saint-Huberty was his lawful wife. "I declared to my tyrants," he writes in a letter on the subject, "that I was married, that I had a son, and that I must see them both. They listened to my prayers. She came with that dear child of five years old, who threw himself round my neck. As for her, full of courage, she extended her hand to me, and for the first time in presence of strangers I called her my wife. This moment, which made her mine for ever, caused me to forget my foes, my persecutors, the future and the present. I owe that to my enemies. To say how much I was indebted in these frightful circumstances to my wife would be impossible."

After seizing the Count's trunks, and taking from them his portfolio and all his papers, the French authorities allowed his wife and child to accompany him back to Milan, whither he was sent under escort.

Arrived at Milan, the Count lost no time in writing to his mother to inform her of the marriage contracted seven years before in Switzerland. The mother received the news in the most gracious manner.

"The name of mother," wrote the old Countess to the new one, "which you give me, my dear daughter, makes me hope that you will receive with pleasure the name which in testimony of my affection I offer to you. It is a gift which the heart alone can appreciate, and yours will not be closed to anything that comes from the mother of your husband. I know that you constitute his happiness and his consolation. May you be happy, all three. I thank you for the obliging things you are kind enough to say to me. I can only contribute to your mutual satisfaction by my prayers, which I offer to God several times each day."

At Milan the Count was taken straight to the residence of the Commandant, who at once separated him from his wife, and sent him to a convent where prisoners of war were confined, with orders that he should be strictly watched. A sentinel was, in fact, placed at the end of his bed.

Soon afterwards he was taken to the castle, and there placed in a dungeon twelve feet long by six broad.

On 12th June he was told that he would have to start immediately for Paris, though, in consideration of the state of his health, there seemed to be some probability that his departure might be postponed. The same evening, however, he was driven in a carriage to a place some seven or eight miles distant from Milan, where he had an interview, which lasted for two hours, with Bernadotte, in presence of Berthier. He was asked to give explanations in reference to the papers found in his portfolio, which had not been examined in his presence. He was questioned in particular about a memorandum, in which the writer represented himself as the author of the

coalition formed between Berlin, Vienna and Madrid, which, after publishing it, the Directory, on the 4th of September 1797, made the pretext for its *coup d'état.*

He denied the authorship of the document, declaring that he had not been to Vienna for nineteen years, and that he had never set foot either in Berlin or in Madrid. Bernadotte came to no decision, and Count d'Antraigues was taken back to his dungeon.

Meanwhile, the Countess d'Antraigues, remaining at Milan, hurried about the city soliciting from morning till night either the liberation of her husband, or, at least, the mitigation of the rigour with which he was being treated.

At last, thanks to the urgent representations and prayers of his devoted wife, Count d'Antraigues was liberated on parole, with permission to visit the libraries and to walk about the city, but on the understanding that he was not to change his place of abode. But six weeks afterwards, on the 25th of August, he somehow, with or without a secret permission from the authorities, disappeared. The people who lived in the same

house had not the least idea that he had gone; and, as he was supposed at the time to be ill, Mme. de Saint-Huberty continued to make broth and prepare various remedies in rather an ostentatious manner, saying that her husband was still seriously indisposed.

The Count's friends have raised the question whether or not he received a hint from the Commandant to be off. It appears more probable, however, from the letter, partly in cypher, which he left for his wife, that he broke his parole and fled, to avoid being sent to Paris, where he would almost beyond doubt have been put to death. "On this 25th August 1797," the letter began, "at four in the morning, at the moment of my flight, if God vouchsafe to bless my attempt, my dear wife will do all she can to rejoin me at

7	17	12	16	18	9		22."
I	n	s	p	r		c	k.

The letter contained full instructions as to certain bills, drawn upon Vienna and other places, which the Countess was to bring with her. Addresses, too, were given of various relatives in Italy, Switzerland and France, to whom she was to apply for money. She was also to

receive funds from Mordvinoff, the Russian Minister. In case of his being recaptured, the Countess was to send him his trunk, his dressing-case, his books, and, moreover, 5 7 8 11 9. m a d e r. She was further to write to the Emperor and to the King of Spain, urging them to take action. Finally, she was to take the greatest care of her marriage certificate, and of all the papers necessary for establishing the identity of the child.

According to one version of the Count's escape, it was due to a bribe of ten thousand francs, which the Countess had realised by the sale of her jewels.

As soon as she was informed that her husband had passed the frontier, she hastened to follow him, and on the 30th of August addressed to the Marquis D'Andreoli, in whose house they had been lodging, the following letter:—

"Monsieur le Marquis, I have the honour to inform you that, having obtained our liberty on condition that we should make our departure *incognito*, we have fortunately succeeded in placing ourselves, together with our effects, in safety, without any

suspicion being aroused on the subject. Accordingly, Monsieur le Marquis, I have the honour to thank you for all the attentions you showed us during my husband's captivity and my residence with you. I send you herewith the keys of our apartments, which, I think, are in the same condition as when we entered, as well as the linen you were kind enough to lend us.

"COUNTESS D'ANTRAIGUES."

It was understood in the Royalist Party that the Count d'Antraigues owed his escape entirely to his wife; and to recognise at once her devotion to her husband, and her services to the "cause," the Count of Provence, in his theoretic character of King, decorated her with the order of Saint Michael.

In the month of January 1798 the Count d'Antraigues made an official announcement of his marriage. In May 1800 he received from the King of the two Sicilies, both for himself and for his son, the royal order of Constantine, together with a pension. On 16th June 1804 the Countess d'Antraigues received from the

Emperor of Austria a patent confirming, in flattering terms, a pension which she had previously obtained.

"His Majesty the Emperor — King," ran the document, "has very graciously resolved that the life pension of one thousand ducats in specie, previously granted to Mme. Anne-Antoinette Clavel de Saint-Huberty, Countess d'Antraigues, in memory of the services rendered by her to her late Majesty, Queen Marie-Antoinette of France, as superintendent of the music of this august princess, be assigned for the future to the State Exchequer, and be paid quarterly, beginning from the present date, on the signed receipt of this lady or her husband, His Majesty, wishing that this pension be subject to no charge, duty or diminution of any kind.

"COLLOREDO."

This patent found the couple at Dresden, where the Count d'Antraigues was fulfilling a secret mission for the Emperor Alexander of Russia, corresponding with Sweden through the Swedish

Minister Alopeus at London, and working generally to bring about a European coalition against the Emperor Napoleon I. The Count and Countess passed at Dresden the greater part of the year 1804, all the year 1805, and the first months of the year 1806. Then, driven away by Napoleon's victories, they could find no place to stay at on the continent, and took refuge in England, where the Count at once entered into relations with the Foreign Office. Mention is several times made of him in Stapleton's *Life of Canning*, and in the same writer's edition of *Canning's Correspondence*.

He is supposed to have communicated and sold to the English Government the secret articles, real or imaginary, of the Treaty of Tilsit. According to M. Thiers (*History of the Consulate and of the Empire*), he had not "earned the money" which the English Government paid him. It is difficult, indeed, to understand from whom he could have obtained particulars of a treaty drawn up with so much privacy, and signed personally by Napoleon and Alexander.

The legend on the subject, as received in France, is that the Count had somehow obtained

knowledge of the treaty, and had communicated his information to Canning, who, in return, gave the Count a pension payable out of the Secret Service money; and it was this, always according to the accepted legend, which, a few years afterwards, caused the assassination both of the Count and Countess.

Fouché, it is said, wished to know what was going on between Count d'Antraigues and Canning, and for that purpose sent two secret agents to London, with orders at all cost to intercept the correspondence. The Count's servant, Lorenzo, is further said to have shown to the agents the letters which passed between his master and the Foreign Office; and it was when he found that his treachery was about to be discovered, through a visit which the Count was on the point of making to Canning, that, losing his head, he first assassinated his master and mistress, and then committed suicide.

What, however, could Count d'Antraigues' secret correspondence matter to the French Government in presence of the open facts that England was carrying on war against Napoleon's forces in

Spain, while Napoleon himself, at the head of an immense army, was invading Russia?

It appeared, moreover, from the evidence given at the inquest, that Lorenzo killed his master and mistress in a fit of rage due simply to his having received notice to leave.

CHAPTER VII.

The following account of the tragic affair appeared in the *Times* of July 23d, 1812:—

"The Count and Countess d'Antraigues, French noblesse, and distantly related to the unfortunate family of the Bourbons, resided on Barnes Terrace, on the banks of the Thames. They lived in a style which, though far from what they had formerly moved in, yet was rather bordering on high life than the contrary. They kept a carriage, coachman, footman, and a servant out of livery. The latter was an Italian or Piedmontese named Lawrence; and it is of this wretch that we have to relate the following

particulars. The Count and Countess, intending to visit London as yesterday, ordered the carriage to be at the door by eight in the morning, which it accordingly was; and soon after that hour they were in the act of leaving the house to get into it, the Countess being at the door, the Count coming downstairs, when the report of a pistol was heard in the passage, which, it has since appeared, took no effect; nor was it then ascertained by whom it was fired. Lawrence was at this time in the passage, and, on the smoke subsiding, was seen to rush past the Count, and proceed with great speed upstairs. He almost instantly returned with a dirk in his hand, and plunged it up to the hilt into the Count's left shoulder; he continued his course and made for the street door, where stood the Countess, whom he instantly despatched by plunging the same dirk into her left breast. This last act had scarcely been completed when the Count appeared also at the door, bleeding, and following the assassin, who made for the house and ran upstairs. The Count, though extremely weak and faint, continued to follow him; but so great was the terror occasioned

that no one else had the same resolution. The assassin and the Count had not been upstairs more than a minute when the report of another pistol was heard, which satisfied those below that Lawrence had finally put an end to the existence of his master. The alarm was now given, and the cry of 'Murder, murder!' resounded from every mouth. The Countess was still lying at the front door, by which the turnpike road runs, and at length men of sufficient resolution were found to venture upstairs, and, horrible to relate, they found the Court lying across his own bed, groaning heavily, and nearly dead, and the bloodthirsty villain lying by his side a corpse. He had put a period to his own existence by placing a pistol that he found in the room in his mouth and discharging its contents through his head. The Count only survived about twenty-five minutes after the fatal blow, and died without being able to utter a single word.

"The Countess had by this time been brought into the house; the wound was directly on her left breast, extremely large, and she died without uttering a single word. The servants of the

house were all collected last night; but no cause for so horrid an act was at that time known: all was but conjecture.

"The following circumstances, in so extraordinary a case, may be, however, worth while relating. The Count, it appears, always kept a brace of pistols loaded in his bedroom, and a small dirk. About a month ago the Countess and the servants heard the report of a pistol upstairs, and were in consequence greatly alarmed; when one of the latter, a female, went upstairs and looked into her mistress's room, it was full of smoke, and she screamed out. On its clearing away, she saw Lawrence standing, who told her nothing was the matter: he had only fired one of his master's pistols. It afterwards appeared that he had fired into the wainscot; it was loaded with ball, and the ball from the pistol is yet to be seen.

"The Count and Countess were about sixty years of age. The latter was highly accomplished, a great proficient in music, and greatly admired for her singing in fashionable parties. There is no reason whatever to believe that

Lawrence was insane. Only about ten minutes previous to his committing this deed of blood, he went over to an adjoining public-house and took a glass of gin. He had lived only three months in the family, and report says was to be discharged in a few days.

"The Count and Countess had resided in Barnes for four or five years, and have left an only son, who, we understand, is at present in this country studying the law.

"Besides his house on Barnes Terrace, Count d'Antraigues had a town establishment, No. 7 Queen Anne Street, W. He was fifty-six, and the Countess fifty-three years of age. The Count had eminently distinguished himself in the troubles which have convulsed Europe for the last twenty-two years. In 1789 he was actively engaged in favour of the Revolution, but during the tyranny of Robespierre he emigrated to Germany, and was employed in the service of Russia. At Venice, in 1797, he was arrested by Bernadotte, at the order of Bonaparte, who pretended to have discovered in his portfolio all the particulars of the plot upon which the 18th Fructidor was founded. The Count

made his escape from Milan, where he was confined, and was afterwards employed in the diplomatic mission of Russia at the Court of Dresden. In 1806 he was sent to England with credentials from the Emperor of Russia, who had granted him a pension, and placed great dependence upon his services. He received here letters of denization, and was often employed by the Government. The Countess was the once celebrated Mme. Saint-Huberty, an actress at the Théâtre Français. She had amassed a very large fortune by her professional talents."

Needless to say, she never appeared at the Théâtre Français.

The same impression of the *Times* contained this other account:—

"The Count d'Antraigues, a very eminent political character, formerly a deputy of the nobility of Vivarais to the States General, author of many eloquent tracts, who had married the celebrated singer and actress of the Royal Academy of Music at Paris, Mme. Saint-Huberty, was murdered

yesterday morning at seven o'clock, along with his lady, in their summer residence on Barnes Terrace, by one of their servants named Lorenzo, a Piedmontese, aged twenty-five years, who had been only a few months in their service, and whom they had no reason to suspect of such a diabolical design,

"Both the Count and Countess d'Antraigues were preparing to come to town, as they usually did every Wednesday. The Count had an appointment (as we understand) with his particular friend Mr Canning to meet him at ten o'clock, and had actually taken his papers in his hat, and proceeded down the staircase from his bedroom, his lady, who went before, being at the door waiting, and calling for the servant to open the carriage. Lorenzo at that moment took from the bed of his master a pistol and a most superb Turkish poignard, which the Count d'Antraigues had brought with him from Constantinople. He discharged the pistol at his master, at six paces distance, on the staircase, and missed him, the ball passing between the Count and the Countess.

"The murderer, seeing that the ball had not

taken effect, took to the poignard, and stabbed his master in the shoulder. Though the blow was mortal, the Count had still strength enough to walk to his room. The servant then ran to the Countess, who was shrieking, and plunged in the most audacious manner the poignard into her breast. She fell, and died instantly, without any groans, saying only, 'Lorenzo! Lorenzo!'

"It appears that the Count died, as soon as he re-entered his room, from an effusion of blood in his chest. The murderer, bewildered and frantic after his ferocious deed, came to the room where his master was lying, and seizing on another of the four pistols which the Count kept constantly for his protection at his bedside, with the poignard, under a presentiment that one day or other his life would be attempted, discharged the contents into his mouth, and shattered his head in the most fearful manner. He died on the spot, and fell dead by the side of his master.

"The alarm was given by the coachman, who was standing at the door, and the other servants. Two professional men came instantly, but no assistance could prevail. The house was besmeared with

blood, and presented a most shocking spectacle, the three bodies being extended in such a small space. The coachman drove to town to fetch the doctor, and the lawyer who was generally employed by the Count, and to convey the melancholy tidings to the house of the deceased in Queen Anne Street, W., where a great crowd of people were collected during the whole of the day. Dr Chavernac of Gerrard Street, the surgeon, and Mr Trickey, the solicitor, both the intimate friends of the deceased, went post-haste to Barnes Terrace. The papers, jewels and other effects of the Count and Countess were put under seal in their presence, and in that of a magistrate and several respectable neighbours. A coroner's inquest is to take place this day at Barnes on the three bodies.

"No cause is yet known for the atrocious act which has deprived of life two persons, who, by their talents, knowledge, amiable manners and powerful connections, ranked very high in society. The Count was a man of colossal stature and imposing countenance, only fifty-eight years of age, and his lady fifty-two.

"Mr Vansittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer,

the particular friend of the Count, was informed of the lamentable event early yesterday, and Lord Sidmouth commissioned Mr Brooks of the Alien Office to take, conjointly with Count La Châtre, Commissary of His Majesty Louis XVIII., the proper measures to secure the papers and property of the deceased, who had been formerly Commissary of His Most Christian Majesty in Italy, and till his death an agent and correspondent of the Emperor of Russia."

The *Times* of 24th July 1812 contained this report of the inquest:—

"An inquest was held yesterday at the 'White Hart,' Barnes Terrace, before Charles Jemmett, Esq., Coroner for the County, after a view of the bodies of the Count and Countess d'Antraigues, and of Lawrence who murdered them.

"Susannah Black, the first witness, deposed that, on the 22d July instant, she was ordered by the Countess, about eight o'clock in the morning, to take some books, etc., to the carriage door; that she followed the Countess to the door, and

saw Lawrence near the carriage, with his face to the door, and ordered him to open the carriage door for his mistress, instead of which he walked into the house, and as he passed her mistress a pistol was fired, but she did not know who discharged it. She saw the Count on the stairs, and Lawrence going up the stairs. Did not see anything in his hand. She afterwards saw Lawrence coming downstairs with a pistol in his right hand, and his left hand behind him, but could not see whether he had anything in it or not; that she ran into the garden alarmed; and that, on her return into the house by the hall, she went to the front door and saw her mistress lying on the ground, in the footpath of the street, near the carriage. She called for assistance, and another servant and the coachman, David Hebditch, came to her, and they took the Countess into the house. There was a great deal of blood about her, and she was alive, though speechless. Mr Ball, a surgeon, was sent for, who attended immediately. But her mistress died in a few minutes after the same. Witness stated that one day, about three weeks ago,

when the Count was absent, she was with the Countess in her bedroom, when they heard a loud report, and she ran downstairs thinking it was a rap at the door. But finding no one there, she called 'Lawrence,' but no one answered. She then returned upstairs. The Countess met her at the door of the bedroom, and said it was the report of a pistol. Witness ran upstairs to the Count's room, and on coming to the door saw some smoke issue from it, and saw Lawrence in the room. She asked him what he was doing, and he answered 'Nothing.' She then went to her mistress, and told her Lawrence had fired off a pistol. The Countess went upstairs, and witness followed her, and heard her talk to Lawrence very coolly, but could not tell what she said, as she spoke French or Italian; but the Countess told her afterwards that he said he had been handling the pistol and it went off. When Lawrence came to the kitchen, she asked him how he dared to meddle with his master's pistols in his absence, and he answered it went off by chance as he was handling it. She never knew of any quarrel or anger between the Count

and Lawrence. Said Lawrence was a sober man, but latterly had been more passionate than before. Yesterday morning, the wind having blown the parlour door to with a great noise, the Count spoke rather sharply to Lawrence, thinking he banged it and would wake his mistress. Lawrence had lived in the family about three months. Believed the dagger produced to be her master's, having many times seen it hanging in his room.

"Elizabeth Ashton, another servant of the Count and Countess, deposed that when the Countess came first downstairs, she was standing at the street door to wait on her mistress. The carriage was at the door. Her mistress passed her, and went towards the carriage—the Count was coming downstairs. Witness heard the report of a pistol, was stunned by it, said she was a dead woman, turned round and said 'Lawrence! Lawrence!' when, looking up, she saw Lawrence coming downstairs with a pistol in one hand and a dagger in the other. She screamed out, and ran into the street, crying 'Murder! murder!' went over to the public-house to give

an alarm, and on her return found her mistress lying on the footpath of the street near the carriage, and being so affected that she found she could not give any assistance, she went away.

"David Hebditch, coachman to the Count and Countess, deposed that he received orders from Lawrence to have the carriage ready yesterday morning, the 22d July, at five minutes before eight; that he was at the door with the carriage before the clock struck eight; that, as soon as he arrived there, Lawrence came to the coach, opened the door, and put into the carriage a tin can filled with oil; that he then went into the house, and soon afterwards returned; that when the Countess came down, and was proceeding to the carriage, Lawrence went into the house, and soon after he passed his mistress the report of a pistol was heard; that the Countess asked him, the coachman, what was the matter, and he answered it was from the inside of the house; that in a few minutes afterwards, as he was sitting on his box before the door, he saw Lawrence come downstairs, and, with a sharp instrument he held in his hand, which the wit-

ness believed to be a dagger, strike it into the shoulder of the Count—he saw the dagger enter his shoulder; that Lawrence then passed the Count, and proceeded towards the street door; that he, the coachman, got off the box as quickly as he could, and, as he was going towards his master, the Countess passed him, going towards the carriage, and, on turning round to follow her, he saw her staggering, and she fell, exclaiming, 'It was Lawrence! it was Lawrence!' He saw blood about her, and some on the ground, but could not tell exactly what part it came from. Did not see Lawrence afterwards, but in about three minutes more heard report of another pistol, which appeared to come from upstairs. Soon after the Count came to the door, and blood ran out of his sleeve. Left him there, and went to assist the Countess into the house. On surgeon coming and desiring her to be stripped, went out of room to look after his master, and found him sitting on the bed in his own room in a reclining posture, with his feet on the floor. Was then alive, but speechless. At the same time saw Lawrence, with his face lying on the

floor, apparently dead, with some blood near his mouth. Mr King, a surgeon, then came and desired the Count might be stripped. Witness assisted to do so, and held him while they got a sponge and some water and washed the wound. After that he went away, and drove carriage to town. Believed Lawrence was sober. He spoke very correct to him, the coachman, when he gave him his order, and did not appear at all mentally deranged.

"William Hitchin, master of the 'Sun' public-house at Barnes, deposed that yesterday morning, about eight o'clock, coming along the street, he saw Lawrence put a tin can into the Count's carriage, and return into the house. When he got opposite the door, he heard the report of a pistol. Turned immediately round, and saw the Count and Countess just within the door. The Countess said something to the coachman, who answered, 'It is indoors, my lady.' The Count and lady returned into the house. He then heard some persons screaming, and was going to get some weapon, but coachman begged him not to go, and he did not. The coachman and he

were going into the house when the Countess came out of the house, passed them, and fell down. Thought she had only fainted, and, while standing by her, saw the Count come out of the house, with blood streaming from his shoulder. The Count instantly returned into the house, and immediately afterwards witness heard the report of a pistol in one of the upper rooms; this report occurred before the Count could possibly get to his own room. Some people came up, and he accompanied them into the house. The first thing he saw on the floor of the passage was a dagger, bloody, and with some silk on it as if it came from a shawl; on desiring a person to go upstairs with him, he refused without having a weapon, on which witness gave him the dagger, and himself took a poker. The coachman followed, and the witness desired him to go first into the room, which he did. On entering the room, he saw the Count sitting on a bed, alive, but speechless, and Lawrence lying on the floor dead, with a brass double-barrelled pistol close to him.

"Matthew Ball, Surgeon, of Barnes, deposed that,

about a quarter past eight o'clock in the morning, a woman came to his house, and desired him to come immediately to Count d'Antraigues', for the Count and Countess were both murdered; immediately went, and when he came into the house, saw the Countess lying on the floor of the parlour, and a great deal of blood both on the floor and on her clothes. Then examined and found a large lacerated wound on her right breast, made by a sharp instrument, which had passed through the third and fourth ribs to the cavity of the chest, from which a great effusion of blood had proceeded. As soon as he found the wound was mortal, and that she could not live many minutes, witness went up to the Count to assist Mr King, a surgeon, who had previously gone up to dress his wound, and found the Count had received a wound on his left shoulder from a sharp instrument, which had penetrated four inches. He was motionless and speechless, and died in about a quarter of an hour after his (Mr B.) seeing him. Saw two small leaden bullets in the string-board of the stairs, which appeared to have been shot from a pistol. When he en-

tered the Count's room, saw Lawrence lying on the floor on his belly, with a quantity of blood under his face; on examination found a loaded pistol had been discharged into his mouth, the contents of which had very much lacerated and torn his mouth, and from which wound he had instantly died, the bullet being still lodged in the vertebra of the neck.

"The Coroner then told the jury that, as they had not only heard what the witnesses had sworn, but also the depositions read over to them, it was unnecessary for him to go into a recapitulation thereon. He should, therefore, leave them to determine whether, from the evidence they had heard, they believed, first that Lawrence had murdered the Count and Countess; and secondly, whether he had committed suicide, being in his senses.

"In about five minutes the jury returned a verdict that Lawrence had murdered the Count and Countess, and had afterwards committed suicide, being in his senses."

RACHEL.

Elisa Felix, who became so celebrated under her assumed name of Rachel, was born at Munf, a village in Switzerland, on 28th February 1821. Her father, Jacques Felix, and her mother, Esther Haya, were both French and both Jewish. They dealt in second-hand clothes, but were so poor that Elisa, at the age of ten, turned street-singer with her sister Sophie. As she was singing one day in a thoroughfare at Lyons, Choron, who happened to hear her, was struck with the beauty of her voice, and, approaching her, inquired as to her circumstances and her family. He next paid a visit to her father, whom he found in a garret, and offered to admit the child to the Institution

of classical music of which he was director. The proposition was accepted, and a month afterwards the Felix family installed themselves at Paris. It was at Choron's suggestion that Elisa exchanged her name for that of Rachel; but the director's confidence in her future as a vocalist was soon to be overthrown, for the child completely lost her voice. She then passed from the Institution to a dramatic school established by a disappointed old actor named Saint-Aulaire, who, although he could find no favour on the boards himself, could at least train others for the stage.

She progressed rapidly, and ere long attempted the representation of some of the light characters of Molière. It was in tragedy, however, in the plays of Corneille and of Racine, that she was destined to shine, and at the age of seventeen she had already identified herself with at least half-a-dozen of the heroines of these great masters. Already her critics could find no adequate words in which to praise her, and already her audiences experienced every emotion, every transport which she exhibited or rather felt upon the stage; for she so completely lost herself in whatever character

she was playing that she could scarcely be said to act. She no longer knew herself to be Rachel.

A record, however, of her successes would fill a volume. It is probable that she hastened her end by excessive study, for she would sometimes within a few months learn half-a-dozen difficult and elaborate parts, so as to represent them in the highest perfection. She often complained of fatigue and exhaustion, and she was destined to succumb at the early age of thirty-eight to consumption.

In view, perhaps, of her Jewish descent, Rachel was frequently, though with great injustice, accused of illiberality. Whenever she arrived in a new town to give a performance, the municipality were scarcely contented unless she gave to the poor the whole of her share of the receipts. She gave much; but "not giving everything," as M. Arsène Houssaye puts it, "she might as well have given nothing."

Nothing vexed her more than to hear herself accused of meanness. One of her best friends, Baron Rothschild, said to her, by way of consola-

tion: "If I had listened to everyone who asked me for assistance, I should be obliged now to borrow five francs from you."

"My dear Baron," she replied, "you are only troubled in this way at Paris, but I am followed by importunities all over the world."

On one occasion, when a friend wrote to her to borrow five hundred francs, she replied: "If I were to send you the five hundred francs you ask for, I should some day, perhaps, have need of the money, and you might find it difficult to give it back. If you will allow me to send you a hundred francs, I am quite certain, on the other hand, that I shall never need them, so that you need not trouble yourself about repayment. I enclose, all the same, two hundred; you will understand me."

She was always ready with a happy remark, and was sometimes really witty. When one evening, behind the scenes at the Théâtre Française, two actresses came to blows, one of them lost her chignon in the struggle. "My dear," exclaimed Rachel to the victorious combatant, "you have deprived her of one of her illusions."

In reference to the gift of eternal youth possessed by so many actresses, she once wrote: "Look at a good housewife side by side with a good actress, and what do you observe? At forty the former is already an old woman, because she has troubled herself too much about her domestic affairs. The actress of forty is still quite young, because she has never bothered about washing bills or the expenditure of her cook. The housewife has always been preoccupied with her household, whereas an actress has had no preoccupation except in connection with art and love: two fountains of youth.

"But I am almost copying Brantôme, for it is he who says: 'Live like the rose. The more a flower is cultivated, the longer it lasts.'"

One of Rachel's greatest dramatic triumphs was achieved in Scribe and Legouvé's play of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. It was long, however, before she could be prevailed upon to represent the chief character, though it had been written at her own suggestion. M. Legouvé required all his ingenuity to circumvent her caprice. Of the

means by which he at length removed her prejudice against the piece, he himself gives an account which is far too interesting to be omitted.

"The drama of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*," he says, "now so well known, in which the chief incident is the death of an eminent actress by means of a poisoned bouquet presented by a jealous rival, was the joint composition of Scribe and myself, and had been undertaken by us expressly for Rachel at her own suggestion, I might even say at her own request. But the few months that we devoted to writing the piece had the effect of disgusting her with it. Changeful and fickle by nature, she was still more so by instability of character. She was continually asking everybody's opinion, and, of course, everybody's opinion left its impression. A few jesting remarks from some thoughtless critic completely disenchanted her with the idea that had transported her with delight five minutes before. This was at least the case with our poor *Adrienne*. Rachel's last advisers completely frightened her. Such a daring, not to say shocking, de-

parture from the legitimate drama! What! *Hermione* and *Pauline* consent to speak in prose! The daughter of Corneille and Racine become the step-daughter of Monsieur Scribe! Unheard of profanation!

"On the day of the reading, therefore, Rachel, as may be imagined, came to our meeting fully determined to refuse the part. The room was quite full. The actresses—at that time they were permitted to judge like other people—were quite as numerous as the actors; and a certain quiet courtly air prevailed over all the assembly, striking me the very instant I entered with an uneasy, chilling foreboding.

"Scribe took the manuscript and began to read. I buried myself in an arm-chair, and quietly watched.

"I soon became aware of a double play taking place all round me, and compelling me to be a most interested spectator. First, there was our own, performed by Scribe's tongue; secondly, there was the other, progressing silently in the hearts of the judges, but visible as a noonday sun to the eye of the watchful observer. Vaguely informed

of the secret dispositions of their illustrious comrade, the judges felt themselves to be in a somewhat perplexing predicament. A work written for Mdlle. Rachel, but one which Mdlle. Rachel herself was unwilling to play, was decidedly capable, if received by the committee, of becoming a subject replete with difficulties of many kinds, vexatious lawsuits not being the least of the number.

"Instead of listening to Scribe, therefore, as he rolled off *Adrienne,* the judges carefully watched Rachel's countenance; and as this countenance preserved a marble impassibility, the other countenances preserved a marble impassibility too. During the whole course of those five long acts she never smiled, never approved, never applauded. The universal stillness, in fact, was so complete that Scribe, thinking he saw one of the judges falling asleep, interrupted the reading to exclaim with great politeness:—

"'Do not consider me, my dear sir. No ceremony, I beg.'

"The judge defended himself very earnestly, and that was the only incident of the reading.

Stay, I am wrong. There was another incident, or at least the beginning of one, in the last scene but one of the final act. Rachel, interested in the situation in spite of herself, raised her back a little from the arm-chair in which she had been reclining, as motionless as if she formed part of it, and leaned forward slightly as if to listen with intentness to the words; but noticing that I had observed the movement, she sank back quickly into her arm-chair, and instantly resumed her marble countenance.

"The reading over, Scribe and myself went into the director's room, where the director himself joined us in a few moments, and told us, with an air of regret, probably quite sincere, that Mdlle. Rachel 'did not see herself in *Adrienne*,' and, as the work had been composed expressly for her, that the committee would prefer taking no immediate action in regard to it.

"'In other words,' observed Scribe as we left the room, 'our piece is refused. Good! We must wait for another opportunity.'

"Next morning three different managers came

to make us offers for the work. Scribe, who dearly loved retaliation, and, above all, liked to revenge himself while he was in the heat, wished to close the bargain at once. But I demurred.

"'No, my dear friend,' said I. 'Our piece was written for the Théâtre Français, and it is at the Théâtre Français that it must be played. The part was composed for Rachel, and Rachel will have to act it.'

"'But how can we induce Rachel to act it?'

"'How? I do not know. But Rachel will play it, and nobody else. While we were working at the piece, though your share in it is considerably larger than mine, you often honoured me by saying that I understood Adrienne better than you. I always believed, in fact, that there was something original and striking in the tragic actress who has learned nobility of character from the noble heroines she is so fond of representing, and who, by dint of interpreting the great Corneille, has imbibed into her soul some of the great Corneille's grandeur. Therefore, this great personage must appear nowhere else than at the theatre of the great Corneille himself.'

"My earnestness half convinced Scribe. He promised to wait a little. The managers became more importunate, one of them saying, by way of an irresistible argument,—

"'My leading lady has never died on the stage. She would love to be poisoned.'

"Arguments of this kind I had no great difficulty in meeting; but when six months had passed without improving the aspect of things, Scribe protested to me that he would wait no longer.

"'Give me but a week,' I replied. 'You are going to spend a few days at Séricourt. Start on your trip to-day. At your return, if I have done nothing, I surrender gracefully.'

"'Very well,' was Scribe's answer. 'This day week I shall expect you to breakfast at eleven.'

"'Farewell. Till eleven o'clock this day week.'

"Off Scribe started. The course I now adopted was as follows:—

"A new director had been appointed for the Théâtre Français. I called on him at once, and spoke to him in substance as follows: 'You are aware that Mdlle. Rachel has refused our piece. Had she a right to refuse it? That I do not

know. Had she a right to put her refusal in such a form? That I do know. She certainly had no such right. That was not the way to return to such a man as Monsieur Scribe a work which he had been requested to write. That was rather offensive treatment towards a master of the highest rank, and, permit me to add, towards a young man who is not in the lowest. Mdlle. Rachel, no doubt, is long since aware of all this, and regrets her precipitancy. Such talents as hers cannot but be acquainted with some of the commonest usages of politeness. Now, a way is still left to bring about a fair understanding, to reconcile her own interests and ours. I shall ask her formally, not to play our piece but to listen to it fairly; not at the theatre, not before her fellow-artists, but in her own drawing-room, in the presence of a few of her most intimate friends. She may choose them herself. She may invite as many or as few as she pleases. I shall come alone, with my manuscript. If the work is then pronounced unsuitable, I take away the piece, and we consider the matter finally settled. But, if it pleases Mdlle. Rachel and her friends,

she will play it, she will have a grand success, and she will call me her deliverer.'

"'The offer is accepted,' wrote Rachel that very evening to her friends. 'I cannot refuse M. Legouvé's request; but I shall never play that ——.' I must omit the term she employed to express her disdain. It is enough to say that it was more expressive than polite.

"The next evening but one had been appointed for the reading. The judges selected by Rachel were Janin, Merle, Rolle, and the director of the Théâtre Français.

"I felt, no doubt, a little flurried as I entered the room, but I was quite master of myself. I knew I was in the right, and had carefully trained myself for the encounter. I had thought over the question with myself somewhat in this way: Scribe was certainly an excellent reader, and had really read our piece admirably before the committee, except as regards one part, that of Adrienne. In my opinion he had not individualised the *rôle* sufficiently for Rachel; he had read it certainly with much spirit, grace, and warmth, but, as I thought, not without something of the

mannerism of a young leading actress. The grandeur I considered rather tame; the heroine was somewhat obscured beneath the woman. Now, it was on this precise point that I had determined to attack Rachel, to capture her, to tame her, to break her in, as it were, by presenting to her a new, and at the same time a grand and noble personage. Her success would be no easy matter; her attempt would be beset with great danger and difficulty. To diminish this danger, and to smooth down this difficulty as much as possible, was evidently our business. It was our business to sketch, in faint but tangible outline, how she was to pass gradually from one line of character to another, and to convince Rachel herself that what the public would consider a complete metamorphosis was in reality nothing more to her than a mere change of costume. This was the point that Scribe had not sufficiently insisted on; this was the fine shading that he had not sufficiently brought out and this was precisely what I had been carefully preparing myself during the last two days to render perfectly visible and palpable to my

audience in general, but to Rachel herself in particular.

"I arrive, and the actress accords me a charming reception, full of that wheedling, cajoling, coaxing grace which became her so well. Her own fair hands prepare my glass of sugared water; her own fair hands bring me a chair; her own fair hands dispose the curtains so that I may have the benefit of the most favourable light. I could not help smiling to myself, remembering, as I did too well, the famous phrase, 'I will never play that ——,' and knowing, as I did too well, the why and wherefore of all this pretty strategy. It was to sugar-coat the pill. How could so sweet and courteous a listener be ever suspected of secret ill-will and malice aforethought? It was all what is called in French theatrical slang 'préparation.'

"I begin. Throughout the first act Rachel applauded, approved, smiled—did, in short, exactly the contrary of what she had done at the committee reading. How was this? It was easy to see. Her part was well prepared. As an excuse for her rejection, she wished to be able to say

that Adrienne's character did not suit her, and as Adrienne does not appear before the second act, praising the first act could evidently do no harm; on the contrary, her very praises would give an air of impartiality to her subsequent strictures, and spread an air of sincerity over the regrets of her subsequent refusal.

"More 'préparation;' but unfortunately here, as often elsewhere, "préparation" overshot its mark. The acting was so exceedingly good that it did not pass for acting at all. Her friends, witnessing what they considered her genuine satisfaction, began to experience something like satisfaction themselves, and, seeing her applaud warmly, applauded too. The reader, emboldened by all these unequivocal signs of approbation, took new courage, and mastered the first act in good style, holding his audience well in hand. In fact, to use a metaphor, he felt himself already sailing serenely under a press of canvas, impelled by that electric current of success which is so well known to dramatic authors, and which, he was now sure, would manifest itself at the decisive moment of victory.

"In the second act Adrienne makes her appearance, holding in her hand the part of Bajazet, which she is studying. The Prince de Bouillon approaches her and observes gaily: 'You still appear to be looking for something. What is it, may I ask?' 'I am looking for the truth,' she replies. 'Bravo! bravo!' exclaimed Janin. 'Ah,' said I to myself, 'that comes from a friend, for certainly the phrase does not merit a bravo.' Rachel, too, was a little startled, and gave Janin a look that seemed to say: 'What! a traitor here?' Fortunately, the traitor's opinion soon became everybody else's opinion. Rachel surprised, and very much embarrassed, at not finding herself filled with her former disdain, made but a feeble resistance against the general impression, and at the end of the second act even chimed in with the prevailing sentiment, saying: 'Well, I always thought there was something in that second act.'

"This was her last semblance of defence. From the very beginning of the third act, she divested herself of her former prejudices as completely as politicians do of unpopular opinions. She ap-

plauded, she laughed, she shed tears, every now and then muttering: 'How foolish I have been!' At the end of the fifth act, she even threw herself on my neck, exclaiming, with streaming eyes: 'How have you kept yourself off the stage?'

"The reader had saved the author.

"I was charmed and flattered beyond measure, as you may imagine; the more especially as, a few months before this, having heard Guizot deliver a rousing speech on some subject or other, she had cried out: 'How I should have liked to play tragedy with such a man!'

"Next morning, at eleven o'clock precisely, I rang Scribe's bell.

"'Well,' he said, with a bantering air, and evidently expecting to have a good laugh, 'what luck? How did you get on?'

"My only answer was to pull out one of the regular notices sent to the actors, and to read it.

"'Théâtre Français — this day at noon, first rehearsal of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*.'

"'What!' he exclaimed; he was actually too stupefied to utter another word.

"I told him the whole story, and a month afterwards the curtain rose for the first and extremely successful representation of our joint production."

It has been said that Rachel died young. It was during a rehearsal of *Adrienne* that she conceived a strange presentiment of her end, which was then not far distant.

Of this rehearsal, with its melancholy forebodings, and of her sad death, three years afterwards, M. Legouvé's account is deeply interesting:—

"That month," he writes, revealed to me a curious instance of the weird and strangely mysterious emotions that are often attendant on dramatic interpretation.

"One evening, a few days after the first representation of *Adrienne*, the ordinary business of the theatre was interrupted for a regular stage rehearsal. Scribe, detained at the Grand Opera by preparations for *Le Prophète*, could not be present. Incessant corrections and repetitions delayed us all so long that it was fully eleven o'clock before we got through the first four acts.

In fact, it was so late that we decided that it was time to stop altogether. Everybody had gone away except Rachel, Regnier, Maillart and myself. Suddenly Rachel exclaimed: 'Here we are, quite alone, masters of the situation. Suppose we try the fifth act. I have not rehearsed it yet. But I have been studying it carefully for the last three days, and I should like to know how I am succeeding.'

"We went out on to the vast stage. No gas, no footlights, no light at all, in fact, but the little argand lamp standing beside the vacant prompter's hole. No spectators even, except a firemen fast asleep on a chair between the wings, and myself seated among the music stands of the orchestra.

"From the very beginning, something in Rachel's accents thrilled me to the heart. Never before had I seen her so truly, simply and affectingly tragic. The flickering little smoky lamp threw livid hues on her face, which were positively terrifying, while the emptiness of the great auditorium imparted to her voice a strange sonority, that startled as well as enthralled. The effect was deathlike!

"The act over, on our return to the green-room, I happened to look into a mirror, and could not help noticing how pale my face was. Regnier and Maillart, too, were like sheets. As for Rachel, she sat for a time in a corner, silent, fluttering nervously, and wiping the tears that still flowed down her cheeks. I went up to her, pointing by way of compliment at her companion's faces, and saying as I took her hand:—

'"You have played that fifth act, my dear, as you will never play it again in all your life.'

"'That is my own conviction,' she replied. 'But do you know why?'

"'I think I do. None being here to applaud, you never thought of acting for effect, and you became in your own imagination poor Adrienne, expiring at midnight in the arms of her two friends.'

"After thinking over this observation for a few moments she replied,—

"'No. That is not why. An exceedingly strange phenomenon took place within me. It is not over Adrienne that I have been weeping, but over

myself! Something suddenly told me that, like Adrienne, I should die young. I felt as if I were lying in my own room, at my last moment, present at my own death! And when I repeated the lines: "Farewell, dramatic triumphs! Farewell, entrancing art that I have loved so much!" you saw me shed real tears. With mournful despair, I was rapidly realising how soon time would sweep away every recollection of my little talents, and how the world would soon be left without the faintest trace of poor Rachel!'

"Alas! Poor Rachel's presentiments were only too well founded! A very few years later she lay on her deathbed, like her sister Rebecca, and with the same hopeless, implacable disease, at a little village in the south of France. In the hospitable home of a warm-hearted friend of Sardou's, she had received a singularly cordial and sympathetic hospitality. In this romantic villa of his, he had, however, indulged his somewhat mystical love for the fanciful by accumulating, in strange and curious contrast, many monuments of the different religions of the far East. Every piece

of furniture was symbolic of something. Arriving hurriedly from her long journey, and almost completely exhausted, Rachel, without looking around, had hardly strength enough left to throw herself on a bed. Waking up suddenly in the middle of the night, she utters a wild shriek of terror! Her eyeballs stare in a stony agony! What does she see? The bed on which she lay was shaped like a tomb, and straight before her eyes, and almost within arm's reach, she sees the misshapen figure of a woman stooping as if to seize her. It was only a wooden image holding the curtain.

"'It is Death!' she screamed at last, flinging herself madly out of bed. 'Help! help! Protect me from Death!'

"Her last days were passed in those alternate fits of terrible illusion and gloomy consciousness which are peculiar to organic maladies. She often said:—

"'For six hours of the day I clutch at something like hope; the rest of the day is filled with black despair.'

"Her sufferings, strange to say, sometimes

revealed themselves in plastic attitudes full of a soft elegance—attitudes of which, no doubt, she was fully conscious, for never, even when writhing under the severest bodily agony, did she cease for a moment to "see" herself. In this she resembled all the great dramatic performers. They are to themselves an everlasting, never-wearying, always interesting spectacle. However great their despair, however cruel their suffering, they can always view it with the eye of a spectator, and see that it becomes them. Rachel knew that she exhibited the elegant pose of a young heroine dying of a deadly disease; by way of variety, she sometimes outlined a graceful statue of grief.

"Chance having brought me at the time to Toulon, I immediately hastened to Sardou's romantic villa overhanging the Mediterranean; but she was too weak for me to be permitted to see her. Next morning, however, she sent me a note expressing her warmest thanks for my visit. It concluded with the following most amiable and flattering, but, alas! expiring words:—

"'No one can create real *women* better than you. Promise to write me a play to *celebrate my return to the stage*—'

"In three days she was dead."

SARAH BERNHARDT.

A LITTLE girl, as Sarcey relates, once presented herself at the Paris Conservatoire in order to pass the examination for admission. All she knew was the fable of the "Two Pigeons," but she had no sooner recited the lines—

> "Deux pigeons s'aimaient d'amour tendre.
> L'un d'eux, s'ennuyant au logis—"

than Auber stopped her with a gesture.

"Enough," he said. "Come here my child."

The little girl, who was pale and thin, but whose eyes gleamed with intelligence, approached him with an air of assurance.

"Your name is Sarah?" he said.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"You are a Jewess?"

"Yes, sir, by birth; but I have been baptised."

"She has been baptised," said Auber, turning to his colleagues. "It would have been a pity if such a pretty child had not. She has said her fable of the 'Two Pigeons' very well. She must be admitted."

Thus Sarah Bernhardt, for it was she, entered the Conservatoire. She was born at Paris in 1847. Her father, after having her baptised, had placed her in a convent; but she had already secretly determined to become an actress. In her course of study at the Conservatoire she so distinguished herself that she received a prize which entitled her to a *début* at the Théâtre Français. She selected the part of Iphigénie, in which she appeared on the 11th of August 1862; and at least one newspaper drew special attention to her performance, describing her as "pretty and elegant," and particularly praising her perfect enunciation. She afterwards played other parts at the Théâtre Français, but soon transferred

herself from that house to the Gymnase, though not until she had made herself notorious by having, as was alleged, slapped the face of a sister-actress in a fit of temper.

The director of the Gymnase did not take too serious a view of his new actress, who turned up late at rehearsals, and sometimes did not turn up at all. Nor did her acting make any great impression at the Gymnase, where, it is true, she was only permitted to appear on Sundays. At this theatre she lost no time in exhibiting that independence and caprice to which, as much as to her talent, she owes her celebrity. The day after the first representation of a piece by Labiche, *Un Mari qui lance sa femme*, in which she had undertaken an important part, she stealthily quitted Paris, addressing to the author a letter in which she begged him to forgive her.

After a tour in Spain, Sarah returned to Paris, and appeared at the Odéon. Here she created a certain number of characters, in such plays as *Les Arrêts*, *Le Drame de la Rue de la Paix*, and *Le Bâtard*, but chiefly distinguished herself in *Ruy Blas*, and in a translation of *King*

Lear. Already she had riveted the attention of the public and the press, who saw that a brilliant future lay before her.

At the end of 1872 she appeared at the Comédie Française, and with such distinction that she was retained, first as a pensionnaire, at a salary of six thousand francs, and afterwards as a *sociétaire.* Her successes were rapid and dazzling; and whether she appeared in modern comedy, in classic tragedy, or as the creator of characters in entirely new plays, the theatre was always crowded. Her melodious voice and pure enunciation, her singularly varied accents, her pathos, her ardent bursts of passion, were such that her audience, as they hung upon her lips, forgot the caprices and eccentricities by which she was already characterised in private life. It seemed, however, that Sarah's ambition was to gain personal notoriety even more than theatrical fame; and by her performances of one kind or another outside the theatre make herself the talk of society. She affected to paint, to chisel, and to write; sent pictures to the Salon, published eccentric books, and exhibited busts. She would

receive her friends palette in hand, and in the dress of a male artist. She had a luxurious coffin made for her, covered with velvet, in which she loved to recline; and she more than once went up in a balloon.

Her caprice, whether in private or in public, was altogether unrestrained. In 1880 Emile Augier's admirable comedy, *L'Aventurière*, was revived at the Comédie Française, and the author confided the part of Clorinde to Sarah Bernhardt. After the first representation, however, she was so enraged by an uncomplimentary newspaper criticism that she sent in her resignation to M. Emile Perrin, director of the theatre, quitted Paris, and came to England, where she gave a series of representations, and, appearing among us for the first time, caused a veritable sensation in London society. Meanwhile, M. Perrin instituted against her, in the name of the Comédie Française, a lawsuit for breach of contract, with damages laid at three hundred thousand francs. It was at this juncture that Sarah accepted the offers of an enterprising manager for a tour in America,

where she achieved no less phenomenal successes than in Europe.

A sensational account of this American tour was afterwards published by one of her associates, Mdlle. Marie Colombier, under the title of *Sarah Bernhardt en Amerique.* This was followed by a second volume from the same pen, entitled *Sarah Barnum.* The latter book, as its title suggests, was not intended as a compliment; and Sarah Bernhardt brought an action against the writer, by which she was compelled to expunge from her scandalous volume all that was offensive.

The rest of Sarah's career is too recent to be traced in detail. Nor can the life of an actress of our own time be dealt with so freely as that of a Sophie Arnould or an Adrienne Lecouvreur.

From America Sarah returned to Paris, where she revived all her old successes, and where, in 1888, at the Odéon, she produced a one-act comedy from her own pen, entitled *L'Aveu,* which met with a somewhat frigid reception.

Among her numerous eccentricities, Mdlle. Bern-

hardt once got married; London, by reason of the facilities it affords for this species of recreation, being chosen as the scene of the espousals. The hero of the matrimonial comedy, which was soon followed by a separation, to which, after many adventures on the part of both husband and wife, a reconciliation succeeded, was M. Damala, a Greek gentleman, possessed of considerable histrionic talent, who died only this year from over-indulgence in narcotics.

THE END.